

IN THESE TIMES

VOL. 16, NO. 29

JULY 8-21, 1992

\$2.00

Lost in race

EXPLORING THE AMERICAN OBSESSION



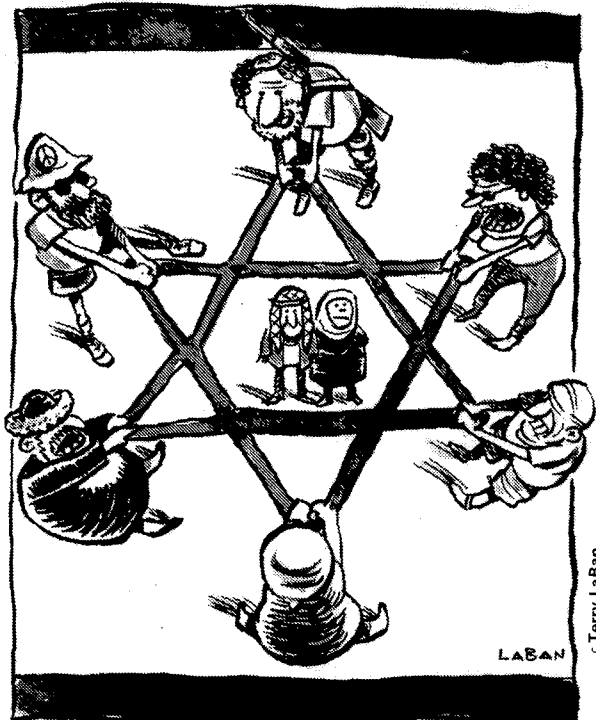
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Waiting for Rabin, waiting for trouble

By Joe O'Donovan-Lockard

"Rabin, Rabin, king of Israel!" chanted people in the rioting crowds at Bat Yam, a working-class Tel Aviv suburb, several weeks before Israel's recent election. They were venting their anger over the street murder of a Jewish schoolgirl by an Arab worker from Gaza. Fellow rioters simultaneously shouted "Death to the Arabs!"

These parallel sentiments underline a key factor in Yitzhak Rabin's success in Israel's June 23 election: Rabin managed to "out-Likud" the right-wing Likud coalition. Likud's appeal to a conservative Jewish electorate, fraught with security fears and conscious of its economic vulnerability, collapsed as Labor shifted rightward.

With the Likud unable to satisfy its own tough rhetoric, Labor capitalized on public disenchantment. In Bat Yam, where Likud once reigned easily, the vote went for Labor. **Rabin's law of return:** Throughout the campaign, Labor Party image-makers hammered at the theme of Rabin as the tough old general, as the 1967 war hero. Television ads featured Rabin re-entering Jerusalem's Old City on the 25th anniversary of its capture. The campaign slogan—"Israel is waiting for Rabin"—captured this theme of a returning Caesar. Rabin's victory signals a nostalgic appeal, a remembrance of post-'67 national

euphoria.

The Labor campaign's chauvinistic glorification of Rabin divorced it from the party's more moderate internal constituencies. As a result, significant numbers of Labor voters fled to the left-wing Meretz coalition. Another reason for the deterioration of Labor's left was generational frustration. Due to a new system of intraparty primaries, the party's grass-roots composition has changed substantially; yet Labor's two leaders—Rabin and Shimon Peres—have occupied top party and government posts since the '60s.

Rabin's success testifies to the continuing political effectiveness of "tough Jew" role models and will shape future campaigns. Yitzhak Shamir, a former underground fighter without overt military glory, was "out-toughed." This reversal is ironic, for it was the Likud that traditionally hawked great-leader imagery while Labor once campaigned on economic and social issues it assiduously avoided during this election.

Inside the right-wing Likud, Shamir's departure in the wake of the election results will bring about a much-postponed leadership succession battle. The struggle will reshape—perhaps even split—the Likud, which was hurt by its own fractiousness. Since Shamir was Menachem Begin's preferred successor, his retirement marks the final end of the Begin era and its ethos of courtly old men at the top.

Many Likud loyalists will flock to the "young princes" camp, headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Health Minister Ehud Olmert and Benjamin Begin, whose father and family name are significant assets. Sephardi populist and Foreign Minister David Levy, together with his arch-rival Ariel Sharon, fill the other two corners of this three-sided free-for-all.

While watching the Likud's inevitable internal bloodletting may be a brief and even enjoyable spectator sport, the process appears just as inevitably set to drive the party deeper into its political embrace of settlers in the West Bank and Gaza. Settlers have gained a crucial voice within the Likud during its last 15 years in power. Ariel Sharon, the party's biggest champion of settlements, stands to profit most from their disquiet over the future.

Unsettling questions: Bidding for American loan guarantees to support Russian-Jewish immigration, Labor quickly announced plans for a freeze on "political" settlements near centers of Palestinian population, in dubious distinction from "security" settlements in the Jordan Valley and elsewhere. With Israel's election results warming their hearts, State Department officials have already begun signaling for a quick resumption of Arab-Israeli peace talks.

Yet Labor's advance toward the negotiating table, starting with the partial settlement freeze, will mark the advent of major domestic turmoil in Israel. Just as illegal Jewish settlements became the bane of Rabin's first government from 1974 through 1977, so too a similar wave of hilltop dig-ins and army-settler confrontations could cause headaches for a new Labor-led government. Should Rabin succeed in implementing his plan for unilaterally imposed Palestinian autonomy within six to nine months, civil violence could emerge from settlers who view this as an illegal forfeiture of Jewish sovereignty.

Although the new Rabin government will face fierce opposition from Jewish fundamentalists intimately acquainted with God's plans, this is only the beginning of a contest over basic national direction. In much the same manner as the Algerian question destabilized French politics throughout the '50s and early '60s, Israel cannot effect a withdrawal from the Occupied Territories without encountering a dramatic social price in its metropolitan territory. The division between die-hard "Greater Israel" colonizers and realistic decolonizers (as between the *pieds noirs* and De Gaulle's followers) will set the country's agenda through this decade and beyond. The settler violence Israel has exported to the West Bank and Gaza is on its way back home.

With Likud's public credit in temporary abeyance, the Gush Emunim settlement movement provides a logical and purposeful locus of opposition. Gush Emunim has thrived best when its energized followers could cast themselves as outsiders rather than as the habitués of government ministries they have become. The Likud's eclipse promises a renaissance for the Jewish settlement movement, adding a new fervor generated by its theocratic vision.

Disaffection from the Likud does not translate into any more Israeli public affection for Palestinians. Nothing in the campaign or election results evidences a mainstream Israeli willingness to radically alter Israeli-Palestinian power relations. Military government, weeks-long curfews, house demolitions and widespread administrative detentions will remain in place long after the elections.

Yitzhak Rabin, who as defense minister ordered the army to break Palestinian bones at the beginning of the intifada, is an architect of this oppression. While it is not impossible that a Rabin government will begin disassembling the system, Palestinian cynicism toward the election results seems entirely reasonable. The intifada, as troubled and distorted by internal Palestinian violence as that uprising has become, generated an undeniable dynamic for change within Israel.

Since Palestinians do not have their own polling booths, Israeli elections during the occupation are referenda among the rulers, not the ruled. Contrary to claims that Israel is "the only democracy in the Middle

INSIDE STORY

East," elections held under such circumstances are not the practice of democracy in a democratic state. Given a fully democratic choice by both Arabs and Jews living west of the Jordan, a two-state solution would be their overwhelming preference today, despite substantial irredentist sentiments within both populations. Both Israel and Palestine are fated to live with their fervent dreamers of Greater Israel and undivided Palestine.

What's left, unstated: Public support in Israel for a two-state solution emerged with significant new strength in the unexpectedly strong showing of Meretz, a left-wing coalition list. It remains to be seen whether party leader Shulamit Aloni can translate 12 Meretz seats in the 120-member Knesset into a stringent government-adopted anti-settlement policy, or can enforce any pledge obtained from Rabin.

Meretz now largely occupies the fulcrum of power in coalition negotiations, a point long held by the religious parties. A moment of opportunity for Israel's Zionist left, long a futile public conscience, has arrived. Failure to turn its electoral advantage into concrete support for Palestinian independence will return it to irrelevance.

Finally, the postelection coalition negotiations have also marked the perpetuation of a political quarantine against the bulk of Israel's Arab minority, one that has held for more than 40 years. Yitzhak Rabin has made clear that he will not form a government with support from either the Democratic Arab Party or Hadash (the Communist list), which have sufficient mandates to underwrite a new government formation. Labor's leadership prefers to cut deals with religious parties—like the Sephardi ultraorthodox Shas Party, whose rabbis regularly issue medievalist calls for the exclusion of women from public life. If the Rabin government is to initiate a decolonization process in the West Bank and Gaza, it will render the common currency of colonial practice against Arab-Israelis even more glaring.

International comment on Israel's elections has focused on the apparent promise its results hold for renewed Arab-Israeli peace negotiations. In the U.S., everyone from liberal Democrats to George Bush has been encouraged, a unanimity based on good riddance to Shamir's patent obstructionism. Yet this same welcome presumes legitimate purpose and benign ends to American diplomatic intervention in the Middle East, an assumption disproved on numerous occasions.

A more cautious analysis of Israel's election suggests that even as the new Rabin government displays diplomatic flexibility and a less truculent international attitude, civil conflict over the settlements question will reveal the extent of division within Israel's political soul.

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Published 41 times a year: weekly except the first week of January, first week of March, last week of November, last week of December; bi-weekly in June through the first week in September by Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647, (312) 772-0100. The entire contents of *In These Times* are copyright ©1992 by Institute for Public Affairs, and may not be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without permission of the publisher. Second-class postage paid at Chicago, IL, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 1912 Debs Ave., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 16, No. 29) published July 8, 1992, for newsstand sales July 8-21, 1992. (ISSN 0160-5992)

By John B. Judis

DURING THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION AND the first three years of the Bush administration, the White House and leading congressional Democrats were deeply divided over government's role in trying to halt the decline of American industry. The White House blamed government interference for industry's ills and wanted less of it. The Democrats called for government intervention—under the name of industrial policy—to prod and encourage American manufacturing.

There is now a good chance, however, that no matter who wins the presidential election this November, the U.S. will, over the next four years, adopt an industrial policy. Both Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton and Texas billionaire Ross Perot favor extensive government intervention, and the Bush administration, while continuing to oppose industrial policy rhetorically, has quietly shifted its position over the last year.

The open question is what form this new industrial policy will take and how extensive it will be.

The debate begins: Some aspects of what is now called industrial policy—for instance, spending on canals and education—go well back into the 19th century. There has also been massive intervention in the economy since the '30s, but it has been aimed primarily at smoothing out the business cycle.

The current proposals, which date from the late '70s, call for a new level of intervention in the economy aimed at stemming the secular decline of American manufacturing. Besides improving education, they include the following four types of initiatives:

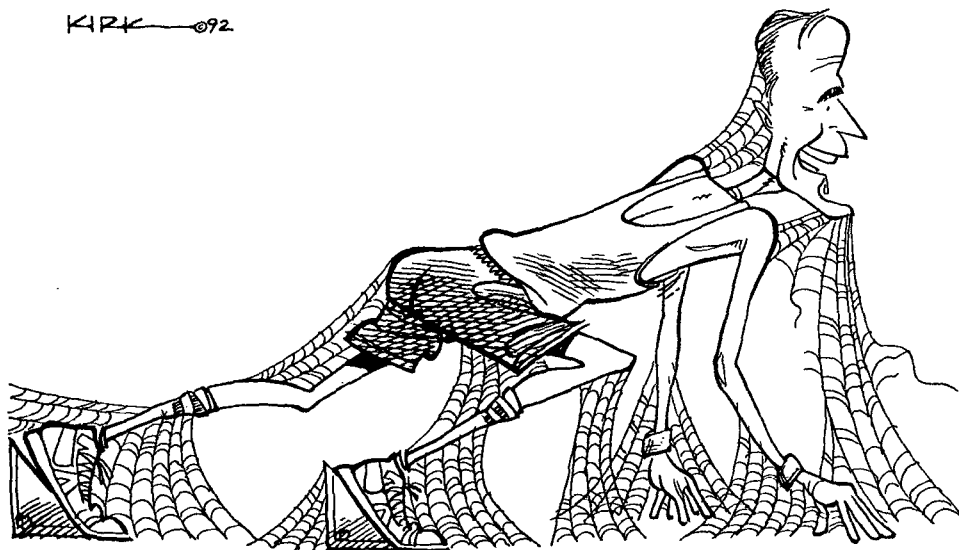
- **Infrastructure:** Since the New Deal, Democrats have promoted public works as a cure for recession. But in the early '80s, some economists and policy experts, inspired by Pat Choate and Susan Walter's *America in Ruins*, began to argue that the erosion of America's infrastructure—its transportation, sewage, energy and communications systems—was threatening industrial productivity.

- **Reviving the rust belt:** Chrysler's narrow escape from insolvency and the massive shutdowns of steel plants dramatized the plight of older American industries. In the early '80s, banker Felix Rohatyn, Chrysler Chairman Lee Iacocca and sympathetic Midwestern Democrats began to call for government subsidies, even a new Reconstruction Finance Corporation, to rescue these "smokestack" industries.

- **Critical technologies:** As the U.S. began to lose ground in consumer electronics and machine tools, policymakers began to propose that government identify and then nurture the "critical" or "leading edge" technologies.

- **Fair trade:** Since the end of World War II, the U.S. had promoted free trade, while ignoring or even encouraging other nations to use temporary trade barriers to rebuild their industries. But beginning in the early '70s, senators and House members from areas battered by imports began to argue that the U.S. should protect its own industries from what they charged was unfair competition.

Cold War rationale: During the '82-'83 recession, the proponents of industrial policy won considerable support in Congress, but when the recession abated, the Reagan



"WE ARE POISED FOR AN ECONOMIC RECOVERY." —G. BUSH

Candidates seek cure for industrial disease

administration was able to reaffirm its opposition to market intervention. Yet in his two terms Reagan did accept parts of the new agenda—either when he was lobbied strenuously or when he became convinced that protecting a particular industry was vital to fighting the Cold War.

Reagan backed import quotas to protect steel, machine tools and automobiles; and he acquiesced in the 1987 creation of SEMATECH, an Austin, Texas-based consortium of computer chip manufacturers that received half its funding from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), an arm of the Pentagon. In 1988, Reagan reluctantly signed an omnibus trade bill. It included not only a "super 301" provision requiring the government to retaliate against countries that were blocking American exports, but also the rudimentary instruments of an industrial policy.

The bill set up a bipartisan Council on Competitiveness to make recommendations for reviving American industry. And in the Department of Commerce, it expanded the prerogative of the National Bureau of Standards, which was renamed the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). Within NIST, the bill established an Advanced Technology Program, and also created a Critical Technologies Institute.

When Bush came in, he tried to dismantle these initiatives. The administration's "troika"—Chief of Staff John Sununu, Director of the Office of Management and Budget Richard Darman and Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers Michael Boskin—rebuked Secretary of Commerce Robert Mosbacher for suggesting that the administration might subsidize high-definition television. They also ousted Craig Fields, who as DARPA's director had subsidized technologies that had a "dual" civilian and military use. They resisted implementing the "Super 301" trade measures passed by Congress in 1988. And they initially agreed to only \$10 million in funding for NIST's Advanced Technology Project. With the Cold War over, they argued, the government had no excuse for intervening in the economy.

But as the Bush administration discovered when it tried unsuccessfully to cut SEMATECH's funding, the ranks of those who favored industrial policy had swelled during the '80s to include liberals and conservatives, labor and business. Two think tanks, the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) and the Economic Strategy Institute (ESI), were established partly to promote industrial policy. EPI was run by Jeff Faux, a left-wing Democrat who used to be associated with the Institute for Policy Studies, while ESI was headed by Clyde Prestowitz, a former Reagan administration Commerce Department official. The electronics industry, led by the American Electronics Association and the Semiconductor Industry Association, were on record favoring industrial policy.

No matter who wins the presidential election in November, there is now a good chance that the U.S. will adopt an industrial policy. The open question is what form this new policy will take.

A generation of defense intellectuals—from Carter's Secretary of Defense Harold Brown to Reagan's Deputy Chairman of the CIA Bobby Inman—also supported bringing to bear on the nation's "economic security" the same power of government that had built the nation's military machine.

It was a formidable coalition, and by last year, it looked like a contest between an irresistible force and an immovable object, but then the Bush administration budged.

Administration conversion: Last October, Bush, under fire for his indifference to the domestic economy, dramatically signaled a change in policy. At a White House ceremony with the heads of Chrysler, Gen-

eral Motors and Ford, Bush committed the government to helping fund a \$260-million joint program to develop a lightweight battery for electric cars. Then over the next months, Bush proved that the joint program was no fluke.

The administration's fiscal year 1993 budget, announced last January, included significant increases in spending not only for basic science, but for research projects that could directly aid industry. The administration requested a 26 percent increase in NIST's funding and a 35 percent increase in funding for the Advanced Technology Program. It also called for a 31 percent increase in funding for advanced manufacturing research in the National Science Foundation (NSF). And it finally agreed to set up the Critical Technologies Institute that had been mandated in the 1988 trade bill.

Then, in February, the administration launched a National Technology Initiative, ordering the 700 national defense labs, which formerly worked exclusively on Pentagon projects, to undertake joint projects with and make their work available to commercial manufacturing firms. And White House science adviser D. Alan Bromley announced that the administration would now encourage DARPA to fund dual-use technology, directly contradicting the administration's past positions.

Presidential challengers: Both Clinton and Perot have endorsed far more comprehensive approaches to industrial policy. On June 19, Clinton issued a "National Economic Strategy" that included \$40 billion a year for a "Rebuild America Fund" to improve the nation's infrastructure. This civilian version of DARPA would "bring together businesses and universities to develop cutting-edge products and technologies." Clinton would also establish an "Economic Security Council... with responsibility for coordinating America's international economic policy."

Clinton also promised to get rid of tax breaks to American firms that move overseas (they presently don't have to pay taxes on overseas profits), toughen tax laws for American subsidiaries of foreign corporations and promote "a stronger, sharper 'Super 301' trade bill."

Perot has not spelled out his economic program as clearly as Clinton has, but he was on record favoring industrial policy as far back as 1988. Like Clinton, Perot has backed increased spending on infrastructure, government subsidies for new technology and a tougher trade stance. He has advocated creating a government agency that functions like Japan's Ministry of Trade and Industry (MITI)—overseeing and subsidizing investment. He has a task force working on a "competitiveness" program that includes Choate, Prestowitz and Fields.

Last week Senate Democrats also got into the act, unveiling an "Economic Leadership Strategy." The product of a Democratic "investment caucus" that began meeting last winter, the strategy melds 30 programs that have been working their way through committees for the last four years. Its prime movers include three potential Clinton vice presidential choices—Joe Lieberman (D-CT), Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) and Al Gore (D-TN). The strategy, focusing exclusively on high technology, would cost about \$20 billion over the next four years.

Continued on page 10
IN THESE TIMES JULY 8-21, 1992 3

By Glenora Croucher & Miles Harvey

She's got legs, he's got...

The SisterSerpents are no strangers to controversy. This militantly feminist arts group has shocked audiences from Germany to Texas with works featuring disembodied penises and references to sharp teeth hidden in a part of the female anatomy most men would prefer remained toothless. But anyone who saw a *Chicago Tribune* blurb on the group's recent Chicago show would probably wonder what all the fuss was about. The *Tribune* illustrated its story with a reproduction of a seemingly benign painting titled "Spring Fashions." The piece depicts a shapely set of legs in high-heeled shoes sticking out from under a flowered skirt. Just about the only people this artwork would offend would be the SisterSerpents themselves, who knew that the silky-smooth legs in the picture should have been covered with a forest of hair. "It did look kind of odd to me," says artist Susan Gofstein. "The point of the painting is the subversion of something that looks traditionally sexy." If that was the point, the *Tribune* missed it. But did the paper airbrush Gofstein's creation to make it a prettier picture?

"No way," says reporter Nina Burleigh, who wrote the *Tribune* piece. "I know for a fact that [Tribune editors] wouldn't do that," Burleigh says. "If [the hair] didn't show up in the final version of the thing, I can't explain it."

Interestingly, "Spring Fashions" wasn't the newspaper's initial choice for illustrating the SisterSerpents story. First the *Tribune* considered running a photo of a painting titled, "Pig IV," by SisterSerpents co-founder Jeramy Turner. "It's a painting of an anthropomorphized pig," Turner says. "It seemed like something Disney would do." Nonetheless, she says, the paper asked the group to provide artwork that was more "family friendly" after a male staffer looked at "Pig IV" and saw a penis. "A male editor looked at it here and saw it immediately," says reporter Burleigh.

Turner, however, insists she never painted a penis into "Pig IV." "I copied it directly from [a portrait of King George III by John Zoffany]. I copied it exactly, inch by inch, except for the head I changed into a pig head and the foot into a pig hoof," she says. "So this guy sees a fold in the cloth and thinks it's a penis because it came from us," Burleigh says her male co-worker most likely saw an "optical illusion," though she concedes that once he pointed out the illusory male member, it was hard to ignore. Still, Burleigh says the *Tribune* chose not to run "Pig IV" because it wasn't the right shape. Shape, size—those sorts of things aren't supposed to matter, right fellas? Apparently not. At least the SisterSerpents got the last laugh on that point.

All in the family

It's almost too easy to take swipes at President Bush, but this one couldn't go without comment. Late last month Bush expressed his shock at reports that rival Ross Perot investigated Bush and his family in the mid-'80s. "I am sick about it if it's true," the president whined. "And I think the American people will reject that kind of tactic to go around investigating the family of the president of the United States, or then-vice president or another American." As former chief of the Central Intelligence Agency, Bush knows how a little digging can provide plenty of fodder for an effective smear campaign. Would Bush do anything like this to his political opponents? Ask Kitty Dukakis. Bush seemed especially distressed that someone would look into the affairs of his children. "Leave my kids alone. I say," he snapped. "They're good, honest boys and a daughter, a good, honest girl." Good, honest boys? Ask the folks at Silverado Savings.

Move over, fellas

Washington State Democrat Patty Murray says she stopped listening to political insiders long ago, and that policy has done her well. So when the experts tell her it'll be tough breaking into the old boys club known as the U.S. Senate, Murray just shrugs her shoulders and keeps on plugging. When she took on Republican Bill Kiskaddon for the state Senate she wasn't expected to win, but she slipped by with a 3,000 vote margin. Now the stakes are higher, but so is her reputation. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* calls Murray "a major Democratic contender," for the seat of retiring Democratic Sen. Brock Adams. Murray likes to focus on family issues. As a senator she promises to pursue better schools, a jobs program and health-care reform.

Please send timely news about local activities, follow-ups on stories we've run or other interesting bits of information—including your address and phone number—to Glenora Croucher, In These Times, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

Joel Bleifuss is on vacation.

INSHORT

UAW reform stalls, union incumbents cruise to victory

SAN DIEGO—United Auto Worker (UAW) members who joined an eight-bus caravan across the Mexican border from their San Diego convention last month got a frightening, saddening look at the consequences of "globalization" of production. They were worried about the flight of their own jobs to Mexico—dubbed "Detroit South" by *Business Week*—which is likely to gain even more factories with adoption of the soon-to-be-announced North American Free Trade Agreement.

In the squatter settlement of El Florido, they saw the squalor endured by workers in the low-wage Mexican *maquiladora* factories, which already employ an estimated 100,000 workers producing cars and parts primarily for the United States market.

But the crisis of this shrinking, weakened union, once the leader of the U.S. labor movement, was much less apparent back on the convention floor. The union's leadership seemed more preoccupied with squelching the UAW's dissident New Direction Movement than with using the occasion to mobilize the union's lower-level leaders for major battles ahead.

They succeeded easily. In the first contested race in two decades, incumbent President Owen Bieber trounced challenger Jerry Tucker. New Directions Movement leader and a former regional director, 7,647 to 409 votes. The administration also easily turned back all of the dissidents' reform proposals, intended to make the union more democratic and leaders more accountable.

Despite support from many big locals and more than 90 percent of union members (according to a Detroit Free Press poll), the convention rejected direct membership election of top officers, continuing election by convention delegates.

In the heated race for West Coast regional director, incumbent Bruce Lee narrowly squeaked by New Directions challenger Glenn Plunkett. But Lee's margin came from a local that Plunkett—armed with affidavits from members that accompany his complaint to the Department of Labor—says violated labor law by failing to give proper notice of the vote.

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it," Bieber backers said repeatedly. The union is "past broke," Plunkett rejoined. "It's falling apart."

The votes hardly reflected the full sentiments of even the convention delegates, let alone the union's members. Bieber supporters lacked enthusiasm, often simply asserting he was doing as well as anyone could under difficult conditions. Like many delegates, Denver aerospace worker

Joe Hysaw admired Tucker as "one of the best minds in the UAW" and a victim of unfair treatment. But, Hysaw said, "I don't waste my vote. He doesn't have a chance to win."

Others said they owed the leadership a favor or didn't want to risk retaliation for a lost cause. Many delegates also felt ambivalent about the union's trend toward greater cooperation with management. Some local leaders would like more innovative, combative unionism, as New Directions proposes, but also believe that they've gained a voice through some labor-management cooperative forums. Other leaders backed the administration because they appreciated having new appointments to joint labor-management boards and other perks that have come with the new strategy of cooperation.

But other local officials with no great love for Bieber thought Tucker's presidential challenge was unwise or resented what they saw as the dissidents' preoccupation with petty parliamentary or personal bickering. Tucker had an alternative platform: shorter work weeks, plant-closing penalties, active solidarity with Mexican and Canadian workers, independence from the Democratic Party. But many delegates weren't convinced he had the answers, even if they were skeptical of current leaders as well.

Bieber made opposition to the one broadly popular dissident proposal—the direct election for union president—a political loyalty test. Also, New Directions did not have another good substantive issue to rally wide support, such as changing the budget to greatly increase the number of organizers, as one union staffer suggested they should have done.

Vice President Stephen Yokich is

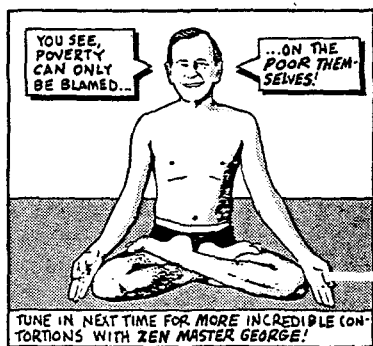
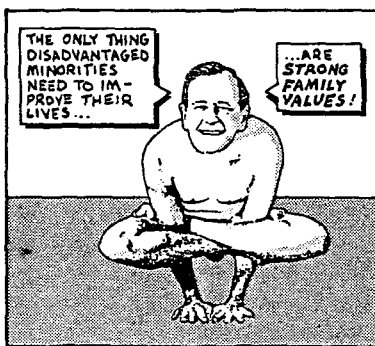
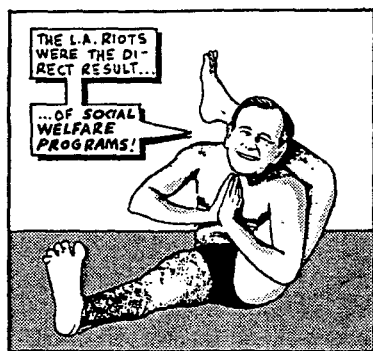
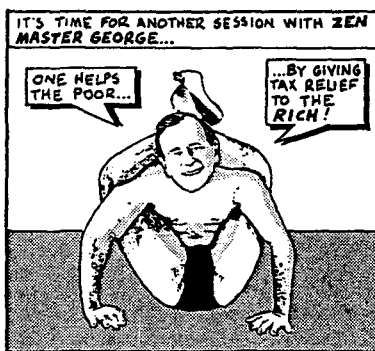
widely regarded as the heir-apparent to Bieber, who, along with several other top leaders, is retiring in two years. But Yokich faces tough bargaining next year with General Motors. GM has already announced plans to close 21 plants employing 74,000 workers, and some analysts think 50,000 more GM workers may lose jobs as the company revises its parts procurement methods. If Yokich emerges badly damaged from GM contract talks, some local leaders speculate, there could be a wide-open battle over the union's leadership and strategy.

New Directions, which had fewer delegates this convention than last, when there were two strong regional director races, is likely to remain a presence, increasing its organizing of local union caucuses. But its greatest chances for success are likely to come if it can win more local and regional positions. It would then have to ally itself with the more innovative, aggressive elements within the staff and local leadership who are dissatisfied with the union yet unwilling to suffer the stigma that comes with the "dissident" label.

With anticipated shifts in auto investment, industry restructuring, aerospace budget cutbacks and hardline tactics from employers such as Caterpillar, the UAW needs to find a way to mobilize its members around a clearly articulated strategy to challenge management investment plans for auto and other industries. But to do that it must be willing to risk a full and vigorous debate within its own ranks, involve members in an active, continuous campaign to pressure employers, and energetically recruit more allies from different constituencies here and abroad. That certainly did not happen in San Diego.

—David Moberg

THIS MODERN WORLD by TOM TOMORROW



By David Moberg

CHICAGO

FED UP WITH BOTH THE DEMOCRATS AND THE Republicans as hopelessly mired in past mistakes, the National Organization for Women (NOW) officially endorsed the formation of a new political party, the 21st Century Party, at its June convention here. Yet at the same gathering, the emotional high point was the appearance by Carol Moseley Braun, the liberal black woman who won an upset victory in the Illinois March Democratic primary for U.S. Senate.

Therein lies an old debate on the American left, resurrected with new vigor in the year

POLITICS

of Ross Perot and voter disgust: Should the left work to elect progressive Democrats or launch a new party with political principles of its own and accountability to active members?

For many, the answer increasingly appears to be the latter. In addition to the strongly feminist 21st Century Party, which will hold a founding conference in August, the following other new party efforts are bubbling up.

- The New Party wants to be a broad-based social-democratic party that is built by first running candidates in local and state races around the country. Yet it also wants to support strongly liberal Democrats, making cross-endorsements wherever possible (now limited to seven or eight states, although the party is challenging laws that prohibit such "fusion" campaigns). It hopes to field some candidates under its name this year. Practical, oriented toward winning and willing to work with Democrats, the New Party hopes to transcend the old inside outside debate.

- The Green Party, which is permanently on the ballot in five states and claims about 40 small-town elected officials, may run as many as 100 candidates in races this fall. Inspired by European Greens, the party's main appeal is ecology, but it also stresses social justice, non-violence and grass-roots democracy.

- Tony Mazzocchi, a longtime leader in the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union, has been promoting Labor Party Advocates. He hopes to recruit more supporters, now numbering "in the thousands," according to one organizer, then have a founding convention within the next two years. Mazzocchi envisions a party that will define political alternatives based on the needs of working people and unions but may not recruit, endorse or run candidates for office, especially early on.

- Veteran African-American organizer Ron Daniels, who formerly directed Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, is running for president under the banner of Campaign for a New Tomorrow. He has called a Progressive People's Convention for August in Ypsilanti, Mich., but so far has made few waves even within his principal black community base.

Organizers of all efforts are talking to each other and cooperating locally, although political and personality tensions are already evident at the top.

The Perot example: Alternative party advocates cite Perot as evidence that the public is ready to abandon the two party system. But most Perot enthusiasts are cheering for a strong leader they think can make things right and booing a corrupt, ineffective sys-

2 parties or not 2 parties? That is the question

tem. There is even a tension between the organizational and ideological impulse behind the new parties and politics derived from strong leaders. But without such strong personalities—Jesse Jackson, Ralph Nader, Bernie Sanders or others—the new parties have no chance.

Public opinion polls, however, do show a massive potential interest in a new party. Pollster Gordon S. Black recently released a study that asked a large sample of likely voters in four different ways whether they wanted a new national political party. From 47 to 65 percent of those polled answered affirmatively to at least one of the questions; 30 percent answered yes to all four, making support for a new party higher than that for either the Democrats or the Republicans.

Yet 51 percent of those new party supporters in Black's survey saw themselves as middle of the road, 28 percent as conservative and only 19 percent as liberal. Black's polling showed a strong distrust of politicians of all types and a desire for both direct democracy (national referendum on tax increases, federal ballot initiatives) and restraints on politicians (term limits, balanced budget amendment, right to recall). These results point to a U.S. electorate that looks more and more like California writ large.

So despite the measurable discontent, there is no majority electorate for a feminist, labor, social-democratic, environmental or minority-oriented party modeled on European political parties. At the same time, opinion polls suggest a substantial majority has much more liberal opinions on many domestic economic and social issues than many elected Democrats. This suggests there is an opening—a very wide one.

Advocates of alternative parties argue that the Democrats are brain-dead, corrupt and totally lacking in principle—so do many Democrats. Both sides argue that the party

is just a hollow shell. But they reach contradictory conclusions. One side says it's easy for anyone to take advantage of the residual party loyalty. The other argues that running as a Democrat means little anymore, so why not use a new label that can come to mean something? Alternative party advocates, however, are more likely to argue that the Democrats are dominated by an elite that will inevitably stifle change. Progressive Democrats argue that the party elite is largely irrelevant.

There is truth to both sides. Third party efforts (there have been more than 1,000 over the past two centuries) have been overwhelming failures, especially in recent decades. Yet Democratic "reform" efforts have made little progress. With some justification, both sides in the debate can maintain that their approach—working inside or going outside—hasn't really been tried.

Recent public opinion polls show massive potential interest in a new party.

What NOW? Even new party advocates like NOW President Patricia Ireland exhibit a profound ambivalence, if not confusion, about what to do. NOW's political action committee won't endorse Bill Clinton for president, but Ireland said "Clinton in the White House would be far superior to Bush." She argued that the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings showed that women couldn't rely on the major parties but also that Braun's victory "symbolized very clearly that when we fight back we can win."

NOW delegates—reflecting sentiments of

the organization's leaders as much as the rank and file—strongly endorsed the 21st Century Party. But the Chicago chapter, with one of the best, if not an impeccable, track record in electoral politics, opposed the new party. In the end, however, the convention affirmed its intentions to work for good candidates in all parties.

Ultimately some alternative party advocates may see their vehicles as mainly a stick with which to beat the Democrats (giving disgruntled liberals a more visible exit than simply dropping out) or as another way to raise issues or money, as some NOW organizers suggested for their party. One NOW leader said she would be happy if the 21st Century Party shifted the terms of debate, much as George Wallace's American Independent Party did on the right, even if it elected no candidates.

None of these new parties has a popular base or a history of mass organizing. NOW, with 280,000 members and success in organizing large rallies like the March pro-choice demonstration, has the biggest constituency. The New Party is starting with the most inclusive conception, rather than departing from one issue or interest group and hoping to tack on others. But it also has the most diffuse image and the limitation, in the American political context, of being primarily an ideological party, albeit a very general, non-threatening one.

A matter of principle: While Americans seem to be drifting away from direct—or even indirect—involvement in politics, the new parties want active members who will hold elected officials accountable, stick to principles and fight for their ideas between elections. They believe that even if good Democrats could be elected, the Democratic Party could never be transformed. Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-MN), however, is trying to organize the Minnesota Alliance as a caucus within the state Democratic Party that will educate citizens about issues and pressure elected officials between elections—all with the hope of gaining control of the state party.

Across the country Citizen Action affiliates have run and won offices as Democrats with candidates from their own ranks of staff or members in as many as 100 elections. They've largely concluded that running as a Democrat is a help, not a hindrance. In a few states, such as Illinois, they've tried to influence the party apparatus, but mainly they simply run their own candidates or endorse progressive Democrats while ignoring party officialdom. Yet even with their large base—about 3 million nominal supporters and \$40 million in total budgets—they've had a small impact. How do the much tinier, poorer new parties hope to succeed against greater odds?

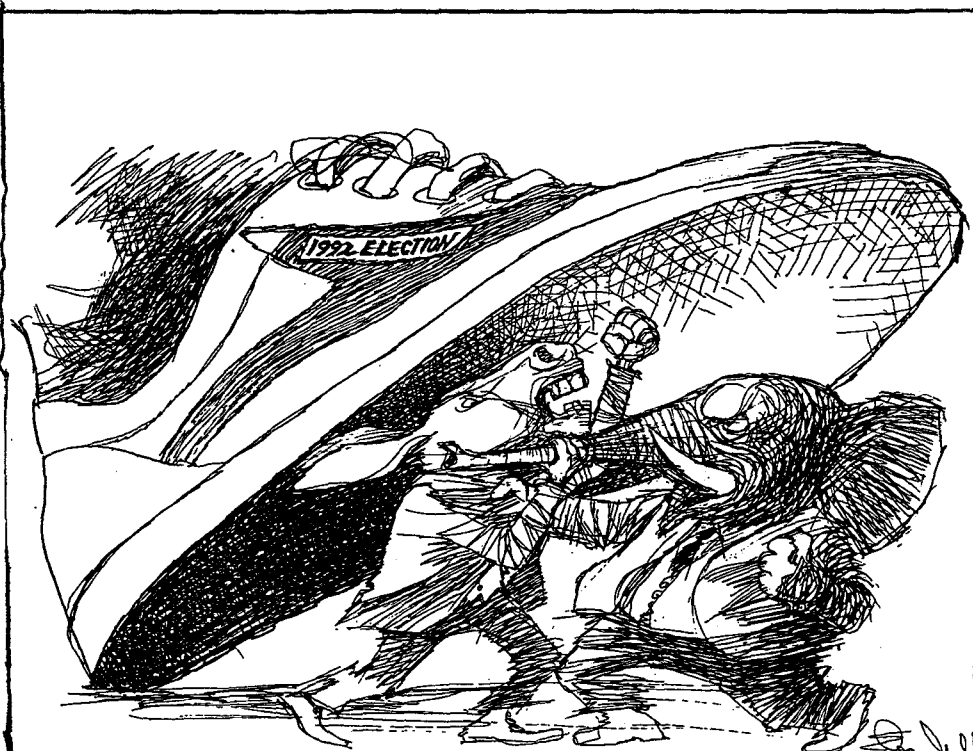
"I hope they're right and I'm wrong," one progressive still working within the Democratic Party says.

"If this moves people, it's better than having them sitting around despairing," another comments, "but it's completely unrealistic."

Assuming a continuation of politics as it has been in recent years, the new party proposals are probably unrealistic, even though some—like the New Party—demonstrate a degree of political sophistication.

Yet New Party co-founder Joel Rogers, who teaches politics at the University of Wisconsin, argues that the country is undergoing a wrenching transformation—such as

Continued on page 10



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A sharper difference is that "Hispanic" is generally accepted as a term used by the federal government to describe the heterogeneous ethnic minority with ancestors across the Rio Grande and in the Caribbean archipelago. But the citizens of that

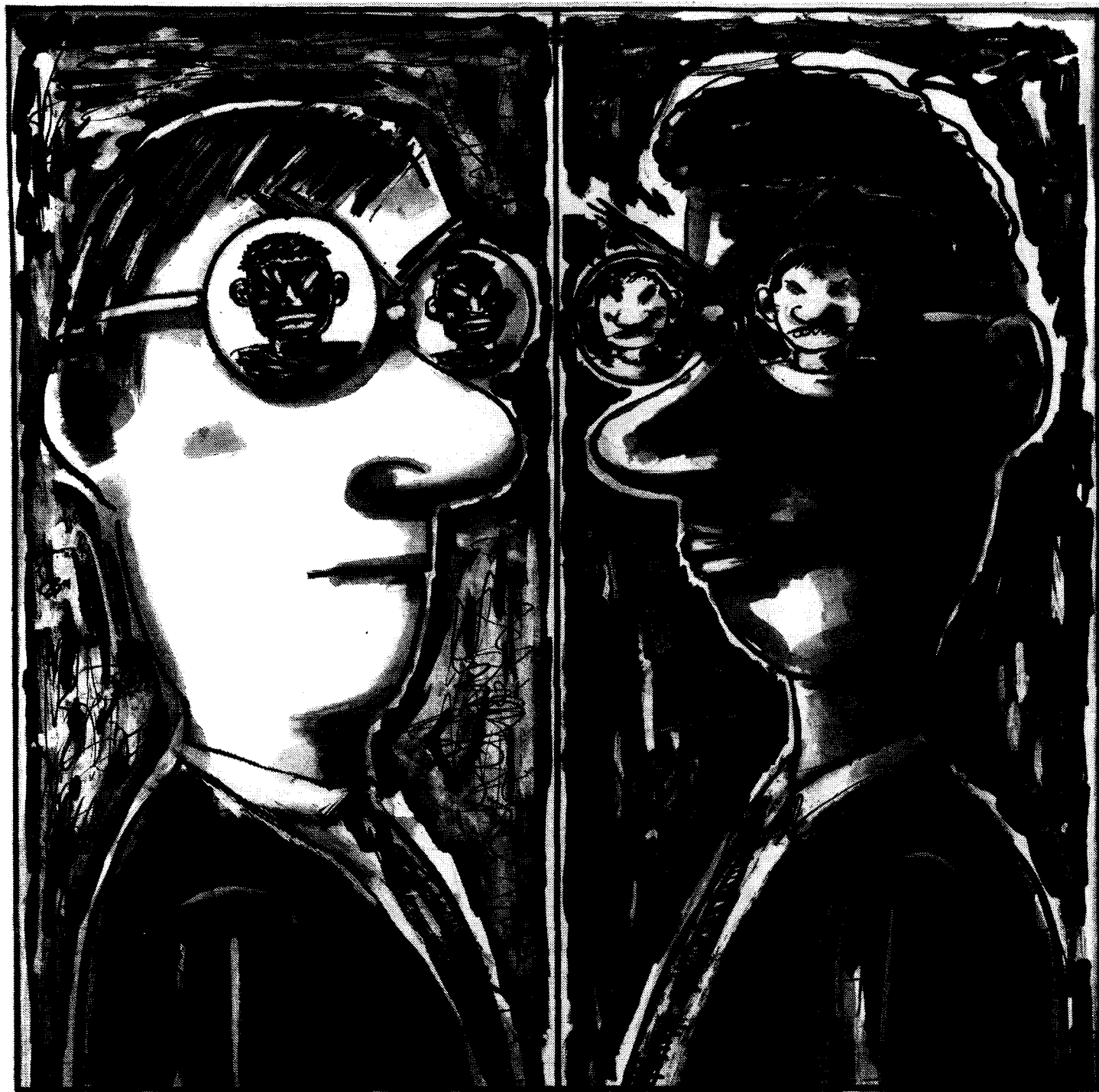
But the word's ambiguity was immediately noticed: Placed alongside other ethnic categories, such as Caucasian, Asian and black, "Hispanic" is inaccurate simply because one can be Hispanic and Caucasian, Hispanic and black and so on. In other words, its reference is to language, not to race. Nonetheless, many Anglos have used the term as a weapon, a stereotype. As with

the Anglo and Iberian oppression. The terms' roots go back to the mid-19th century, when a group of educated Chileans in Paris suggested the name *l'Amerique latine*, instead of "Spanish America." The sense of homogeneity that came from a global embrace of Roman constitutional law, and the identity shared through the Romance languages (mainly Spanish but also Portuguese

Ilan Stavans, a Mexican novelist and critic, is finishing *The Stranger Within*, a volume of reflections on Hispanic culture in the U.S. Author of *Imagining Columbus: The Literary Voyage* (Twayne) and co-editor, along with Harold Augenbraum, of the forthcoming anthology *Growing Up Latino* (Houghton Mifflin), he lives in Manhattan.

The hip-hop connection: And since hip-

While most rappers who use the term have no extra-commercial agenda, some are trying to make a larger point. Through frequent use they are attempting to denude the word of its symbolic wallop and subvert European culture's seemingly omnipotent power of definition. "If we can redefine the word nigger and transform it into something positive, we would take away white folks' most powerful verbal weapon," said Robert Vaughters, owner of Freedom Found bookstore in Chicago's Hyde Park. Vaughters, whose store specializes in Afrocentric works, remains a bit wary of the effort to reclaim the dreaded epithet, but he said he's willing to give the



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What's more, after belatedly acknowledging the importance of group nomenclature, black leaders three years ago mounted an intensive campaign to popularize the term African-American as the most accurate designation for Americans of African descent. "The shift in our self-concept that results from calling ourselves African-American could be the beginning of a serious cultural offensive," said Ramona Edelin, the president of the National Urban Coalition and the prime mover in the nomenclature campaign. For black youth of the hip-hop generation to symbolically turn their backs on this concerted effort is yet another sign of the growing distance between African-American leaders and their young constituents.

Not another word: "I think that much of this new popularity for the word 'nigger' is a function of youthful rebellion," said Clarence Page, the Washington, D.C.-based columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*. "I remember the 'bad nigger' pose of the Black Panthers, and I realize I've seen this all before."

But despite his contextual understanding of the issue, the word still numbs him. "Viscerally, I still recoil when I hear the word 'nigger,' and I'd like to think that we can eliminate the word from the vocabulary before my 3-year-old son grows up," he said.

"Instead, we keep reviving it. On the other hand, my logic tells me to not let myself get too upset over a simple word. And I understand the attempt to reappropriate and defuse the word. But words hurt; and I don't know if we as a people will ever be free of the pain caused by that particular word."

He is also concerned about the mixed signals that the common use of the word sends to whites and the racial antagonisms provoked by that linguistic uncertainty.

Many rappers compare their efforts to those African-Americans who picked the word "black" out of the West's garbage can, dusted it off and began wearing it as a proud appellation. Before the Black Power era of the '60s, "black" was used as a pejorative adjective in most African-American communities as well. The history of black Americans' struggle for an authentic *public* identity in a culture that systematically debases their ancestral roots has seldom included such an embrace of white Americans' dehumanizing epithets.

If rap artists can shift the word "nigger" from a negative to a positive, they will have effected one of the most sweeping etymological transformations in the history of the English language. But even if they're successful, this question remains: Will it have been worth the effort? □

rappers a chance.

The effort is not a new one. Dick Gregory, the comedian-lecturer-organizer who in 1968 wrote a book brandishing the stark title *Nigger*, said his purpose was to seize the word from white racists and devalue it as an insult to African-Americans. Another attempt to recast nigger was made a year later by H. "Rap" Brown—the rap connection?—in a 1969 book entitled *Die Nigger Die!* Brown put an ideological spin on his embrace of the word.

The outlaw appeal: "To be black in this country is to be a nigger," he wrote in the book's introduction. "To be a nigger is to resist both white and Negro death. It is to be free in spirit, if not body. This word, 'nigger,' which is taboo in Negro and white America, becomes meaningful in the black community."

For Brown, who has since changed his name to Jamil Al-Amin and now leads a small Moslem community in Atlanta, the word "nigger" signified the outlaw image that was all the rage during those intense years of the late '60s. Significantly, the word's rebirth in the '90s is being midwived by the so-called "gangsta" rappers, who also seek to embody the outlaw ethos. In fact, the "bad nigger" role is an enduring and sometimes endearing one in African-American folklore: the rebellious slave who constantly sought escape from the plantation was the original bad nigger.

These days, however, Al-Amin is of a different mind. "A lot of what we did back then was designed for shock value to scare white people and as somewhat of a catharsis for black youth," he said in a recent interview. "Because of our lack of discipline, however, we squandered a lot of energy and made many mistakes. Unfortunately, calling each other nigger was one of them."

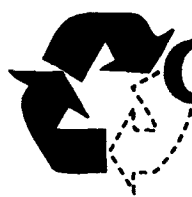
Homicide and nihilism: Like many other African-Americans of his activist generation, Al-Amin now believes the word nigger perpetuates the crippling legacy of slavery. According to this view, the word was created by slave owners to dehumanize enslaved Africans and, despite the best efforts of those

"If we can redefine the word nigger ... we would take away white folks' most powerful verbal weapon."

seeking a semantic transformation, its psychological power is too deeply rooted to be easily deracinated.

Some analysts have even linked the increased use of the word to the skyrocketing rates of homicide among black youth. They blame nigger-laden lyrics and the attitudes they foster for rationalizing and perpetuating

a nihilistic mentality among those who already suffer the debilitating effects of ghetto reality. "When you devalue the personhood of black people by consistently referring to them with a debased term like 'nigger,' it can't help but exacerbate the lack of respect for their humanity and thus their lives," said Dr. Carl Bell, a psychiatrist and former gang member who is executive director of the Community Mental Health Council on Chicago's South Side. "A nigger is not a person, and so it's no big thing to snuff one out."



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By Bill Gasperini

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN

Mujahedin win the war but peace eludes them

THE COMMUNIST-LED GOVERNMENT OF Afghanistan may be history, but rivalries between the mujahedin rebel groups that seized power in April have kept the country on the brink of further fighting. Even as guerrilla groups have agreed to political changes, their unresolved disputes have made stability an elusive goal.

Foremost among these changes was last month's swearing-in of a new interim president as part of an agreement among the myriad guerrilla groups. Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani replaced Sibgatullah Mojadidi after a two-month term, overcoming Mojadidi's stated desire to remain in the post for

AFGHANISTAN

as long as two years. In Afghanistan, political power depends upon military strength, and the leaders of the two strongest military forces both support Rabbani, a renowned Islamic scholar.

The most prominent military leader is the charismatic commander of the Jamiat-i-Islami group. Defense Minister Ahmad Shah Masood, who developed widespread support during long years of guerrilla struggle in the northern mountains against the occupying Red Army. A 40-ish military genius who shuns publicity, Masood prevailed in the intense fighting among the various groups in April due to an alliance he had formed with Gen. Abdul Rasheed Dostum, commander of predominantly Uzbek militia forces based in northern Afghanistan.

Yet despite his position as the pre-eminent mujahedin commander, Masood has been unable to keep all the different groups at peace within Kabul. Pitched battles—killing at least 100 people and wounding hundreds more—have occasionally erupted among groups of heavily-armed guerrillas who control the different neighborhoods, buildings and government ministries they captured from the forces of fallen President Najibullah.

"The problem here is that everyone has guns as well as their own ideas about what should come next," said a foreign diplomat. "No one exerts real control here."

Law and order: At his June 28 swearing-in ceremony, President Rabbani said that restoring law and order to Kabul would be his main priority. His stand is strengthened by his position as the political leader of Masood's Jamiat-i-Islami organization. He also received support from the key holdout against the new ruling arrangement, the leader of the hardline Hezb-i-Islami group Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

Hekmatyar's troops have been poised on the city's outskirts since they were forced from Kabul during the intense clashes of late April. They remain capable of unleashing a new bombardment at any moment, however—the major reason for the capital's tense mood.

Traditional rivals, Hekmatyar and Masood reached an agreement in late May calling for a halt to all fighting and plans for elections later this year. Yet little has been done so far to implement the agreement, and Hekmatyar's backing for Rabbani came amid warnings that all could change unless his key demand is met: that forces loyal to Gen. Dostum, the country's third major power

figure, withdraw from Kabul.

Dostum leads mostly Uzbek and Tajik troops from northern Afghanistan who are known for their military prowess. Once a commander in the Communist government's armed forces, Dostum formed an alliance with Masood early this year, precipitating Najibullah's downfall. Dostum controls a sizable portion of the former government's military assets, including Kabul airport and a vast array of aircraft, helicopters and heavy weaponry in northern Afghanistan.

An unassuming man who still lives in an apartment complex in the northern town of Shebarghan, he brushes aside Hekmatyar's demands as those of a man who holds little real power. "Our troops will stay in Kabul until peace has come to both the city and countryside," the dark-haired, mustachioed general says, sitting in his headquarters surrounded by commanders wearing the colorful turbans of northern Afghanistan. In the north, calm prevails because no one can challenge Dostum's control.

Similarly, areas under Masood's sway are also quiet, particularly his stronghold in the picturesque Panjshir valley in the northeast where he gained fame during ferocious battles with the Red Army in the mid-'80s. Today, the rusting hulks of Soviet tanks dot the valley's landscape, and half-ruined villages of adobe houses are slowly coming back to life.

In essence, Dostum and Masood have forced a kind of "pax afghana" on the country. As has been the case throughout Afghanistan's turbulent history, the strongest warlords wield power just so long as their rivals are unable to overcome them. Hekmatyar's men control a key anti-aircraft base outside the city, as well as pockets of territory and part of an airbase in the country's distant south. But they lack the strength to seriously challenge the combined forces of Masood and Dostum.

The ethnic question: Adding to the complexity of the status quo is the fact that this arrangement represents a significant shift in the country's power base away from the tribal Pashtuns, who live mostly in the south and have dominated the country for more than 200 years. Masood is a Tajik from the Panjshir; Dostum is an Uzbek—only Hekmatyar is a Pashtun. The Uzbeks and Tajiks have traditionally resented Pashtun dominance, and Dostum now appears particularly keen to correct what he sees as Kabul's indif-

ference to the non-Pashtun groups.

"We want a change in favor of peace and guaranteeing the rights of the oppressed nationalities in the country," he says. Dostum claims he abandoned Najibullah after the ex-president failed to keep promises to help the non-Pashtuns. He says he made contact with Masood to plot the government's downfall several years ago when the latter was fighting in the rugged mountains of the northeast.

To back up his military power with political credentials, Dostum recently formed what he calls an "Islamic National Movement," comprised mostly of Uzbeks and Tajiks. There are fears that the conflict's ethnic element could splinter the country, and some speculate that Gen. Dostum may declare the northern territories autonomous.

Added to this centrifugal force is the new independence of the former Soviet republics of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Tajikistan in particular has seen an awakening of nationalist and Islamic ideology in recent months, and contacts between Tajiks on both sides of the border have increased after long decades of isolation under Soviet rule.

This ethnic factor has attracted many of the once-dominant Pashtuns to Hekmatyar's side. Hekmatyar, who began his long political career as a student leader in the '60s, has a history of going it alone against those who are logical allies—such as Masood, who also has a long political history. Many consider Hekmatyar a consummate opportunist who runs a well-organized party, a fact that led many foreign supporters of the mujahedin fight—including the U.S.—to channel huge amounts of military hardware his way over the years.

A soft-spoken man who always wears a distinctive black turban, Hekmatyar is usually described as a hardline Islamic fundamentalist. He insists on having a major say in determining just what style of Islamic government the country should now have. First and foremost, this means excluding Gen. Dostum and his forces from the picture, if that is possible.

"Our stand is very clear: We want a pure Islamic government established by the mujahedin themselves," says Rayadeed Baheer, Hekmatyar's chief spokesman and son-in-law. "We will never accept any sort of coalition government with Communists

or with militias because we consider them traitors, the main cause for all the bloodshed in the Afghan nation for the last 14 years."

Establishing that joint mujahedin government is proving difficult. Ethnic tensions worsened considerably in early June when bloody clashes broke out between smaller mujahedin groups in Kabul. Iranian-backed Shi'ite fighters from the Hezb-i-Wahadat (a coalition of small parties) fought with Ittehad-i-Islami, another faction comprised mostly of Pashtun Sunni Moslems and backed by fundamentalists from Saudi Arabia. Most members of Hezb-i-Wahadat are ethnic Hazaras from central Afghanistan, traditionally the country's poorest ethnic group.

Both Iran and Pakistan have a huge stake in Afghanistan, having provided logistical and materiel support to the mujahedin in the long war against the Soviet occupation. An estimated 5 million Afghan civilians still live in refugee camps located in both countries. Some have returned for brief visits since the old government's fall, but continuing instability, economic turmoil and the serious problem of land mines still buried in war-ravaged areas should make any repatriation a very gradual process at best.

Life goes on: Despite the continued political infighting among the mujahedin, no guerrilla group opposes the goal of a full Islamic government. The current government has already banned the sale of alcohol and required women to cover their heads in public. Many educated civilians have watched events with dismay since the abrupt fall of the old regime.

"I feel as if I were in prison now, unable to really live my life anymore," said a woman who works in a public office. "These 'muj' are wild people from the hills mostly. One came to search a bus the other day and threatened to cut off my friend's lips and pull out her nails because she uses lipstick and nail polish. Now I pull my shawl over my face before walking outside. What life is this?"

With the larger power struggle swirling around them, most ordinary Afghans are struggling with day-to-day survival. Kabul's downtown market bazaar is jammed with buyers and sellers hawking everything from fruit to Pakistani shirts, carpets and plastic sandals from Iran. The bazaar only empties as nighttime curfew approaches or—as occurred during the recent clashes—shooting breaks out nearby. Then, merchants quickly race for cover, toting their merchandise.

Scattered gunfire and the thud of rocket-propelled grenades resound in the city day and night. This is primarily "celebratory" fire to mark the hard-fought victory over the old regime by the mostly-teenaged guerrillas. Having known little but a life of war, they seek to overcome their boredom—without realizing the bullets and rockets fired into the air are falling onto a densely-populated city.

Red Cross officials blame several deaths and numerous injuries on the falling projectiles, and hospitals continue to cope with casualties from the periodic street battles. A daily toll of patients also arrive with legs blown off by the millions of landmines buried in the countryside. After 14 years of war during which the country was saturated with a vast array of sophisticated weaponry, securing the "peace" remains an elusive goal no matter who is in power. □

Despite the continued political infighting among the mujahedin, no guerrilla group opposes the goal of a full Islamic government. The current government has already banned the sale of alcohol and required women to cover their heads in public.

By Diana Johnstone

ON THE EVE OF LAST MONTH'S EARTH SUMMIT in Brazil, Green political parties held their first planetary meeting in Rio de Janeiro. The Greens gathered in São Conrado, half way between the RioCentro site of the official United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the Global Forum of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Flamengo Park.

On the beach side of São Conrado, tourist hotels rise above the steady automobile traffic. On the hillside sprawls Rosinha, the largest of Rio's impoverished shantytowns.

This half-way position was symbolic of the bridging role Greens hope to be able to play in the future.

Success at UNCED would have required creating a certain unity of purpose. But three

EARTH SUMMIT

deepening gaps stood in the way: the gap between North and South, the gap between proposals and financing and the gap between concerned NGO recommendations and government policies.

It is the singularly ambitious project of Green political parties to try to bridge all those gaps.

The NGO-government gap: As consolation for the absence of convincing results, UNCED has been widely described as "the start of a process." In point of fact, the Rio UNCED was supposed to climax a process begun 20 years ago at the U.N. Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. In those 20 years, people's concern for the environment has grown enormously. However, subservience to "the market" has actually weakened leadership at the government level. Regression is flagrant in the U.S.

Today, there is no government leader with the moral stature of the host to the 1972 Stockholm meeting, Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, who was assassinated in 1986. For the host in Rio, Brazilian President Fernando Collor, UNCED offered a timely respite from a barrage of convincing accusations of corruption within his administration.

The rise of NGOs in large part reflects the failure of governments to deal with the major challenges of our time. The most advanced proposals for environment and development were produced by NGOs. But however essential and even heroic the NGOs, they cannot replace the fiscal and regulatory powers of governments. In a time of triumphant "free-market" ideology, it is all too convenient for governments to focus on servicing their national industries' "economic competitiveness" while abandoning ever more intractable social and environmental problems to the generous volunteers from civil society.

Greens are trying to introduce some of the themes developed by advanced NGOs back into electoral politics.

The North-South gap: The constant enrichment of Northern parts of the planet at the expense of Southern parts is leading the world into apocalyptic disasters. This South-North drain got off to a spectacular start when the Spanish conquistadors poured Inca and Aztec gold into Dutch banking houses to give Europe and its outposts an uncatchable head start in capitalism. The drain entered a lethal phase in the late '70s when upwardly revised interest rates caught the poorest of the Third World in an inextricable debt trap.

For the sake of the social and ecological balance of the whole planet, this one-way flow

The Greens in Rio de Janeiro: The missing political link?

must be reversed.

However, casting the worsening polarization between rich and poor in simplified North-South terms is both inaccurate and dangerous. Seeing the problem in geopolitical terms tends to encourage militaristic "solutions." It is essential to make accurate political distinctions in order to build constructive alliances that cut across geographical borders.

The key issue for the future is not who is to blame for the past, but what types of "development" can be pursued without destroying the planet's life support systems. The North cannot expect the South to forego economic development in order to permit the North to go on squandering resources—the main cause of global warming and ozone depletion. But the solution is not for the South to exploit Northern guilt to justify following the same extravagant path to ecological ruin.

This is the tendency represented by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who dismisses "democracy, human rights, trade unions, press freedom and environment" as so many "obstacles that the developed countries want to set in the path of their future competitors." Mohamad wants to keep on profitably destroying the Sarawak rain forest. Quite an opposite approach is represented by Anil Agarwal, founder of the New Delhi Center for Environment Science, who calls for participatory democracy in grass-roots development and a "fair contract" between North and South to provide destitute people with the means to survive while preserving their own environment.

Nor is the North all of one mind. Some people and countries are already more willing than others to contemplate self-limitation and a fair contract with the South. Norway already puts 1.17 percent of its gross domestic product into development aid, well over the official U.N. goal of 0.7 percent. The Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden all contribute more than 0.9 percent, and France is meeting the U.N. goal. The U.S. contributes only 0.21 percent of GDP, heading the world-class misers' list, followed by the United Kingdom with 0.27 percent and Japan with 0.31 percent. These 1990 figures leave aside the thorny problem of donor countries using aid to promote their own national interest (a practice triumphant in the Reagan-Bush U.S.) rather than to address real needs of recipient peoples.

The main challenge to ecological politics after Rio will be to find ways to build North-South alliances. The *Green Agenda* of 75 proposals for environment and development published by the Greens in the European Parliament foresees that "the search for new models of socially and ecologically sustainable development" in both North and South is "the one project that can unite humanity in the 21st century."

The funding gap: The crucial failure of UNCED was the failure to come up with sources of funding for the objectives agreed to in the program it endorsed.

The *Green Agenda* made specific proposals for raising the \$125 billion in annual "catalytic funding" which the UNCED secretariat estimated would be needed to help developing countries carry out the recommended sustainable development programs.

The Greens pointed to three potential fund-

ing sources. First, they called for a system of taxation on non-renewable energies (including nuclear energy) and on carbon emissions in First World countries. A substantial energy-CO₂ tax—or "ecotax"—would also promote energy savings and enable renewable energies to penetrate the market. In their second revenue proposal, the Greens suggested that rich nations increase development aid beyond the U.N. goal of 0.7 percent of gross domestic product to 1 percent (if Norway can do it...). Their third recommendation called for a shift of 10 percent of military expenditures toward a U.N. "global fund" for socially and ecologically sustainable development projects, or "eco-development."

Europe's missed opportunity: The U.S. lost its claim to lead the world in environmental protection in the deregulation frenzy of the Reagan-Bush period. This opened an opportunity for the European Community (EC) to take on a leadership role in global ecological issues.

Alain Lipietz, leading economist of the French Greens, has emphasized that in Europe the social ethos behind government regulations and fiscal redistribution has been far less undermined than in the U.S. Greens elected to the European Parliament (a mostly consultative body directly elected from the 12 EC countries) and in several EC countries keep up pressure for environmental legislation. Europe's progress in energy savings and its generally favorable financial position would allow it to go ahead alone with such important fiscal measures as the ecotax on energy and CO₂ emissions, setting an example for other leading industrial nations to follow. Indeed, various studies indicate that an ecotax could in the not so long term even contribute to competitiveness by speeding the emergence of more efficient energy technologies. Assuming ecological leadership could also give the European Community a moral identity to go with the purely commercial identity promoted so far.

Last year, EC Commissioner for the Environment Carlo Ripa Di Meana appeared eager to go to Rio with constructive new proposals that would ensure Europe's leadership role. A draft directive for an EC ecotax was to be submitted to the European Parliament prior to the UNCED summit.

At the last minute, Europe lost its nerve. An unprecedented lobbying effort by energy-intensive industries paid off. The EC Executive Commission watered down its ecotax

Greens hope to introduce some themes developed by advanced NGOs back into electoral politics.

proposal, first exempting energy-intensive industries and then making its own ecotax proposal dependent on the adoption of similar taxation by its main competitors—meaning, first of all, the Bush administration, known to be unremittingly hostile to such a measure. The EC Council of Ministers then failed to endorse any proposals at all for Rio.

Ripa Di Meana canceled his trip to Rio. In a pathetic last-minute attempt to bring the EC to UNCED, EC Commission President Jacques Delors flew to Rio on Mitterrand's Concorde but had to fly back again without getting a place on the crowded speakers' list.

Europe's abysmal failure of leadership allowed the U.S. to monopolize the role of "world leader" at Rio—which could only aggravate perception of an unbridgeable North-South split. What Rio needed was a clear and forceful alternative to the old criteria of competitive national interest championed by Bush. Without the alternative vision, competitive nationalism risks being fatally contagious.

What Greens are for: The Rio failure confirmed the need to bring ecological consciousness into politics in order to oblige government institutions to act responsibly. The first planetary meeting of Greens held May 30 and 31 in Rio showed that there is such a thing as a worldwide alternative green vision.

At the end of two days of discussion, over 200 Greens from countries as diverse as Mali, Mexico, Ukraine, the U.S. and Australia adopted a final statement which stressed that they came "from both the North and the South of the planet, whose peoples are increasingly being set against each other by deepening social and ecological crisis." Green politics is not a "luxury" of the rich North but a necessity for the whole world—and for the South most of all, the Greens said, inasmuch as the devastating social impact of a deteriorated environment hits poor parts of the world hardest.

Noting that "conditions for life on Earth are deteriorating at an ever faster pace," the declaration stressed the need for basic changes in economic policy. Greens said their democratic convictions and their "love and respect for all forms of life" meant that the green movement would be "a crucial bulwark against the misuse by extreme rightist movements of ecological crisis and resulting fears."

The Greens intend to meet again next year, perhaps in Kiev or in Niger, to establish a formal worldwide network. Meanwhile, they said, they intended to put forward, "as an alternative to unrestrained and destructive consumerism, forms of production and consumption which fully take into account the limits imposed by the social and environmental balance."

This is a tall order, and no one is more aware than Greens themselves of their inadequacy in the face of the tasks they have taken upon themselves. But the days of revolutionary optimism, when it could be confidently believed that "humanity only sets problems it is ready to solve" are over. Humanity is up to its neck in problems it shows no sign of solving. In comparison to deepening worldwide social and ecological disaster, the Greens so far offer only a slight glimmer of democratic hope.

"The Greens aren't up to their historic mission," one European Green leader remarked privately in Rio. "But there isn't anything else."

Diana Johnstone, on leave as *In These Times* European editor, is currently press officer of the Green group in the European Parliament in Brussels.

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New parties

Continued from page 5

the globalization of the economy, vast family and demographic changes, the end of the Cold War and the decay of the old political system. Consequently, there is a new, natural opening for a new party.

Commenting on the results of Gordon Black's survey, Cornell University political science Professor Theodore Lowi concluded that, despite efforts of political sophisticates to confuse the masses, "the two party system is dying," and is now kept alive only through discriminatory campaign and election laws. "The two party system would collapse in a moment if all the tubes were pulled and all the IVs cut," he said.

The Perot candidacy—if it succeeds and

leads to the formation of a new party—seems more likely than current left organizing efforts to trigger that transformation. But if Black's findings are confirmed and Perot's new party draws on independents and moderate Democrats and Republicans, current alternative party organizers may find themselves reorganizing the Democratic Party as their new "third" party.

Today's political landscape seems about as stable as the Southern California desert. Only when the tremors stop will it be clear which fault lines will have cracked open the most, whose political house will have collapsed on the occupants' heads and what new political features will have been thrust on the scene. New party ideas may yet find a home, but probably not in the way party builders now imagine. □

Industrial

Continued from page 3

Different approaches: While Perot's approach differs somewhat from the Democrats—he is more influenced by Japan's example, for one thing—the most important differences are between the Perot-Democratic approaches and the Bush administration's. Following are five major areas of disagreement:

• **Ideological:** Regardless of what Bush does, he and his administration continue to speak as if they favor a laissez-faire approach to the economy. Clinton and the Democrats—and to a lesser extent Perot—have openly and responsibly argued for government intervention. If Bush is re-elected, his lack of candor on industrial policy—like his

dishonesty in 1988 on taxes—will inhibit his efforts to revive American industry.

• **Financial:** While Bush backed an expense transportation bill last year, he is not ready to spend \$80 billion on infrastructure or \$20 billion on applied science and technology during his next term. The Democrats also want to breach the fire wall created by the 1990 budget agreement between civilian and military spending, transferring defense research to civilian, but the president has resisted.

• **Commercialization:** Bush has been most enthusiastic about funding basic science such as the \$12 billion Texas-based supercollider, but remains wary about projects that aid specific industries. Last July, he threatened to veto NIST's funding if an amendment for funding the commercialization of technologies was not dropped. Perot—and the industrial policy proponents that he has gathered around him—favor the government designating and subsidizing critical industries.

• **Foreign content:** Congressional Democrats have attached provisions to many of their proposals to ensure that government subsidies are limited to American firms. The Bush administration has consistently opposed domestic content requirements.

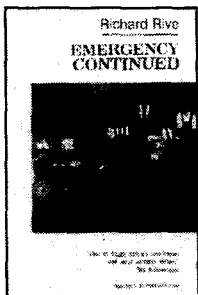
• **Labor policy:** Bush, like Reagan, has been consistently hostile to labor unions. Neither Perot nor Clinton assigns any role to unions in their conception of industrial policy, but the Democrats could be expected to promote labor law reform and Perot to encourage Japanese-style worker-management cooperation.

These differences are extremely significant. Bush's timid approach could prove too little, too late. And any of the approaches, without strong labor participation, could further distance government from the average citizen. But Bush's conversion means that the U.S. is at least moving in the right direction. □

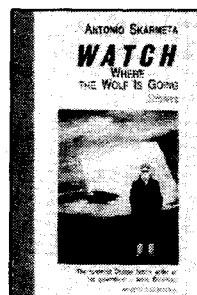
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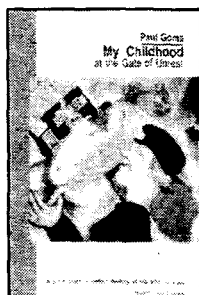
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By Paul Hockenos

CLUJ-NAPOCA, ROMANIA

IN A HIDDEN LITTLE SQUARE BEHIND THE UNIVERSITY here, the sharp sound of a bell breaks the afternoon's shady quiet. From one of Cluj's old wooden doorways bursts a swarm of young faces, chattering away in Hungarian. Above the door, inset in the building's pastel-green Habsburg facade, a chiseled inscription in both Hungarian and Romanian reads "Secondary School No. 2, founded by Istvan Bathory in 1579."

In the Transylvanian capital, where Hungarians constitute about a quarter of the population, the inscription on the Hungarian-language public school has been deemed illegal and the administration fined. Since the February local elections, Romanian ultranationalists call the shots in Cluj's City Hall. The new mayor asserts that even bilingual signs on traditional Hungarian institutions, such as schools or the Hungarian National Theater, implicitly threaten Romania's national sovereignty.

One hundred kilometers to the east, in Tirgu Mures, the local May vote put a Hungarian into the Transylvanian city's top post. The candidate's 57 percent tally reflects the Magyar majority there almost to a digit. Along the single-lane pothole pocked road that connects the sister cities, a young hitchhiker echoes Romanians' fears. "Now the Hungarians will control all of the commerce and business," says Razvan, a mechanic. "They'll redirect all trade to the West, to Hungary, and we Romanians won't have a chance."

In other cities across the country, candidates from the opposition Democratic Convention ousted many of the ruling National Salvation Front's (NSF) representatives, an encouraging sign in autocratic Romania. Yet in Transylvania, the home of nearly 2 million ethnic Hungarians, the centrifugal forces ripping apart post-Communist Central and East Europe continue to polarize interethnic relations. Two years after bloody ethnic violence claimed more than 30 lives in Tirgu Mures, radical nationalist voices have grown louder in both camps. With national elections approaching in the fall, many are asking whether democracy is possible at all in the reigning climate of ethnic tension and suspicion.

Life with Vatra: The Cluj vote was a critical test for democratic forces competing against the roar of nationalist demagoguery. In the election's first round early this year, neither the Democratic Convention, an alliance of democratic parties including the party of the Hungarian minority, nor the ultranationalist Party of Romanian National Unity (PRNU), nor the NSF managed to capture an outright majority. But a PRNU-NSF pact in the second ballot tipped the scales just enough to give the nationalists a slim majority.

The PRNU, the political arm of the ultraright "cultural" organization Vatra Romanesca (Romanian Hearth), appealed to Romanians to vote strictly along ethnic lines. Its chauvinistic propaganda portrayed the Democratic Convention as the mouthpiece of the Hungarian minority, whose one ambition was to return Transylvania to Hungary. Until 1920, Transylvania had lived under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. And, as the ultranationalists never fail to mention, Axis-allied Hungarian troops occupied northwestern Transylvania from 1940 to 1944.

In central Cluj, the spacious square surrounding St. Michael's Cathedral is a mass



The ethnic policies of late Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu still-haunt Hungarians in Transylvania.

Transylvania's trauma

confusion of pedestrian traffic and exhaust-spewing Dacias. A plethora of tiny street-front "import-export" shops boast the latest low-quality goods from Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Hungary. Workers on an average 17,000-lei-a-month salary (\$45), complain that the nouveau riche is disproportionately composed of the nationality that they are not.

Petru Litiu, the Democratic Convention's defeated mayoral candidate, sees the source of the ultranationalists' victory in their crude, anti-Hungarian propaganda, a campaign fueled not least by the powers that be in Bucharest. "The apparatus of the Communist regime is still very much alive," says the retired Romanian air force colonel. "The ultranationalists and the NSF preside over a very professional system of disinformation. We have nothing comparable to combat the manipulation and distortion of historical anxieties."

The Romanian ultranationalists rely upon support from two major constituencies. A cosmetic remodeling of the old *nomenklatura* and security forces, the PRNU enjoys the loyalty of the middle- and higher-level representatives of the transformed system—from doctors and lawyers to army generals. Among the rank-and-file population, the nationalists depend largely upon first-generation Romanians in Transylvania, those resettled here from eastern Romania under Communist President Nicolae Ceausescu's policies of forced assimilation, a strategy designed to dilute the region's Magyar concentration.

Those Romanians whose families had coexisted with Transylvanian Hungarians for generations proved more likely to vote the Democratic Convention. "Deep in their hearts, the Hungarians no doubt wish that Transylvania still belonged to Hungary," says Ion, a Romanian engineer employed in a firm with ethnic Hungarian management. "But I've worked and lived with Hungarians for 20 years, and we've never had problems. This new hatred is manufactured at the political level."

The ultranationalists have stopped at nothing to undermine whatever tenuous solidarity may exist between the region's co-inhabitants. During his short tenure in office, Mayor Gheorge Funar, a former small-time Communist Party leader, has banned international conferences, limited the jurisdiction of Hungarian schools and torpedoed ethnic Hungarian-run joint ventures. The Hungarian minority's postrevolution hopes of resuscitating the historic Bolyai University—closed under Communist rule—are now more far off than during the Ceausescu years.

Along December 22 Street, Vice Mayor Liviu Medrea sits at his desk in City Hall, the Romanian tricolor billowing from the balcony outside his window. In theory, he says, the PRNU has no objections to ethnic Hungarians' demands for schools and bilingual street signs. But first, he insists in typically crass terms, the "separatist, revanchistic Hungarians must prove their loyalty to the

ROMANIA

unitary Romanian state." This, essentially, means abandoning claims to minority rights.

Medrea and his cronies know only too well that ever more draconian policies will undoubtedly engender greater patriotism among ethnic Hungarians. But the fanning of ethnic animosities justifies preservation of the *ancien régime's* machinery of repression as well.

The Hungarian minority party, the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (HDUR), has struggled to rise above the Romanian nationalists' blatant provocations. Moderates, such as the HDUR Cluj County President Peter Buchwald, react philosophically to the prospect of life under an anti-Magyar mayor. "These policies belong to the past," he says. "They are simply an extension of Ceausescu's drive to wipe out Hungarian culture from Transylvania. We have fought against these policies for 25 years, and now we will have to do the same for another four."

As the second largest party in the Bucharest parliament, the HDUR's cooperation with Romanians in the Democratic Convention is key to mounting a challenge against the oft-allied NSF and ultranationalist forces in the still-unscheduled fall election. The center-right Liberal Party recently pulled out of the loose alliance over differences with the

Ultranationalists have stopped at nothing to undermine whatever tenuous solidarity may exist between the region's co-inhabitants.

HDUR, delivering the coalition a heavy blow. Still, discontent with the NSF-led government's economic program—inflation is running at 220 percent, production is down by 50 percent—has truncated the internally fragmented party's support to less than half of what it was two years ago.

The HDUR, as the single Hungarian party, also finds itself fighting the inevitable friction of dissenting voices within its ranks. The maverick party leadership from the near-ethnically homogenous Hungarian region of Szeklerland in central Transylvania has become increasingly outspoken about regional autonomy, a privilege that the Szeklers enjoyed until 1956. In the Romania-speak of the PRNU nationalists, "autonomy" or "self-government" are codewords for Hungarian separatism. In cities or counties such as Cluj, where Hungarians are a minority, the Szekler demands reverberate negatively, undermining even minimal cultural rights for the Hungarians here.

Many younger Transylvanian Hungarians protest the HDUR's lack of a political program beyond minority issues. "Until we win our basic cultural rights, we are also forced to vote along national lines," says Andrea, a linguistics student. "But it's a warped kind of democracy when we have no choice but to vote for one party."

Balkan logic: As in former Yugoslavia, the question of minority rights is implicitly tied to the fate of democracy in Romania. Ethnic tension provides just the excuse that the Bucharest regime needs to maintain its strong-arm, centralized control over the state and the democratic processes. The upper echelons of the army, the refashioned security apparatus and the *nomenklatura* see their future dependent upon a country wracked by ethnic conflict.

Whatever the results of the fall vote, the men behind the new-old power structures are unlikely to be disappointed. The pending unification of the strife-ridden former Soviet republic of Moldavia (now Moldova) with Romania will only add another element of instability to the fragile Romanian state. Along the eastern Dniester River, civil war is already raging between members of the nearly 1 million-strong Russian and Ukrainian minorities and the Moldovan government there.

Even the Romanian Moldovans balk at the thought of unconditional unification under Bucharest's directive. Most seem to envision some kind of loose political autonomy within the state of their Romanian brothers. Should the Moldovans strike an agreement with Bucharest over a form of self-government, the regime would certainly find itself faced with a full-scale mutiny in Szeklerland, if not in the independence-minded western Banat region as well. Little then could halt the country's slide into military dictatorship.

The war in former Yugoslavia has demonstrated how pitifully ill-prepared the international community is to protect the inviolability of borders, on the one hand, and minority rights, on the other. For both governments and their minorities in Eastern Europe, the sad lesson is that they must fend for themselves. The logic eviscerates the notion of regional self-determination and undermines democratic concepts of federal and confederal states.

In Cluj, every young Hungarian able to get his or her hands on a job or scholarship in Hungary has packed their bags. In one way or another, Ceausescu's dream of a homogenous Romanian national state may yet become reality. □

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EDITORIAL



The Supreme Court bends with the wind

The most striking thing about last week's Supreme Court decision in the Pennsylvania abortion case is the overtly political nature of the several opinions. Justice Blackmun wrote that while the court had clearly held that "Roe should be retained and once again reaffirmed," this choice between "two worlds" hung on a thread of only one vote. Suggesting that another Supreme Court appointment by George Bush would throw the nation back into a netherworld, Blackmun warned that at age 83 he "cannot stay on the court forever." When he does "step down," he wrote, "the confirmation process may focus on the issue before us today."

And in an equally rare public admission of the political nature of Supreme Court decisions—one that brought to mind satirist Finley Peter Dunne's comment at the turn of the century that while "the Constitution may not follow the flag, the Supreme Court follows the election returns"—the three authors of the main opinion wrote that nothing but "the most convincing justification under accepted standards of precedent could suffice to demonstrate that a [decision to overrule *Roe*] was anything but a surrender to political pressure." Keeping in mind the overwhelming public support for *Roe vs. Wade*, Justices O'Connor, Kennedy and Souter—all Reagan or Bush appointees—concluded that such a surrender would do "profound and unnecessary damage to the court's legitimacy and to the nation's commitment to the rule of law."

In dissenting, Chief Justice Rehnquist, along with Justices Scalia, White and Thomas, argued for a straight reversal. Chiding the majority for retaining "the outer shell of *Roe vs. Wade*," while beating "a wholesale retreat from the substance of that case," Rehnquist charged the majority of erecting a "Potemkin village" to satisfy "speculative public perceptions."

In other words, while Blackmun labored to put the best interpretation on the majority decision, the others tacitly acknowledged that the court had further weakened *Roe vs. Wade*, implying that public pressure prevented a more drastic evisceration at this time.

This theme was strongly supported by leaders of the abortion-rights movement. Kate Michelman of the National Abortion Rights Action League charged that "George Bush's court has left *Roe vs. Wade* an empty shell that is one Justice Thomas away from being destroyed." Patricia Ireland, president of the National Organization for Women, asserted even more stridently that "Roe is dead, despite the flimsy stay of execution today from the court." And People for the American Way asserted that the court had "left *Roe* standing in

name only, allowing states to pile burden after burden on this fundamental liberty."

There is a great deal of truth in these comments by advocates of women's right to control their lives. The decision did undermine freedom of choice, especially for minors, who under the Pennsylvania law must obtain the "informed consent of one of her parents," or, if that is impossible, the consent of a judge. The majority wrote that any provision of a law is invalid if the provision creates an undue burden on a woman seeking an abortion. If its "purpose or effect is to place a substantial obstacle in the path of a woman seeking an abortion before the fetus attains viability," then it will be struck down. If the parental consent requirement does not place "an undue burden" on the right of teenagers to make their own choice, it's hard to imagine what would.

Even so, given that six of the nine justices are Reagan or Bush appointees, the decision not to simply overturn *Roe vs. Wade* represents a victory for the women's rights movement. It is a clear indication that a majority of the court understands the depth of public support for abortion rights. And, of course, it points up the importance of further political activity to ensure that the new president is pro-choice—or, failing that, that the next Senate be sent a strong message that another Clarence Thomas must not be confirmed.

Although Thomas maintained a low profile in this decision, his vote reminds us once again of the importance of the Senate confirmation hearings—and of the performance of Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA), the other Republican neanderthals and the incredibly flabby and feckless Democrats on the committee. Justice Kennedy's vote to uphold *Roe* symbolizes the need to impress on all senators, and especially the Democrats, that it is necessary to question rigorously. For he is on the court only because of the Robert Bork hearings, in which Democratic senators took a principled stand against Bork's nomination and made it stick.

In this regard, there is good news. In the Illinois primary, Carol Moseley Braun has already defeated a sitting Democratic senator who voted to confirm Thomas. In Pennsylvania, Lynn Yeakey is the Democratic opponent of Sen. Arlen Specter, the main villain in the Thomas hearings. In California's two Senate races, Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein are the Democratic candidates. And in New York, a woman will probably be nominated to oppose the odious Sen. Alfonse D'Amato.

In the end, as in the beginning, the struggle for abortion rights—like struggles for all civil rights—is essentially political. Rights are won when people who need them act to secure them. In this decision the majority implicitly admits that this is so, that its decision is made in the light of public desires. This, in itself, is a step forward in the political education of our nation. And, of course, it points to the task ahead.

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(ISSN 0160-5992)

Published 41 times a year: weekly except the first week of January, first week of March, last week of November, last week of December; bi-weekly in June through the first week in September by Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee, Chicago, IL 60647, (312) 772-0100

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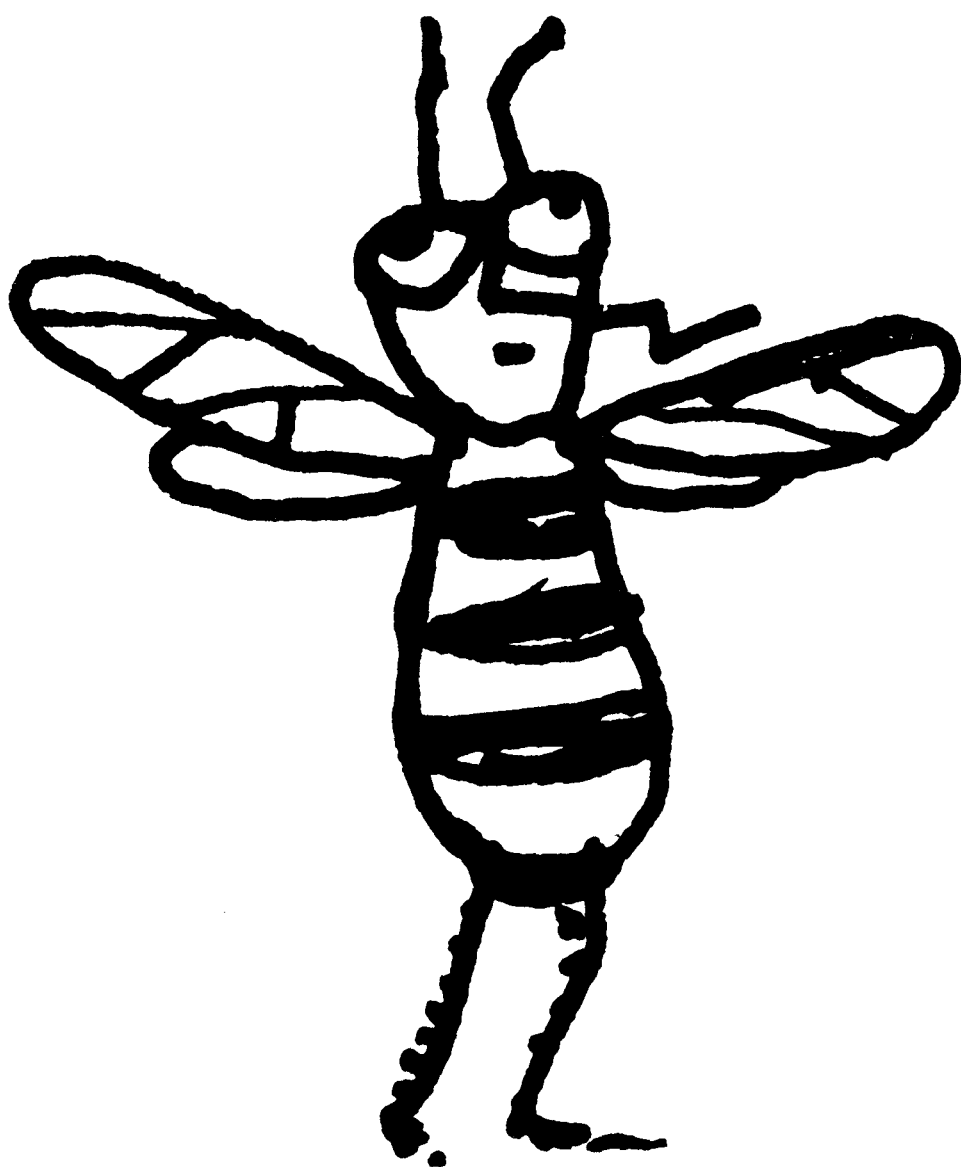
This issue (Vol. 16, No. 29) published July 8, 1992, for newsstand sales July 8-21, 1992.

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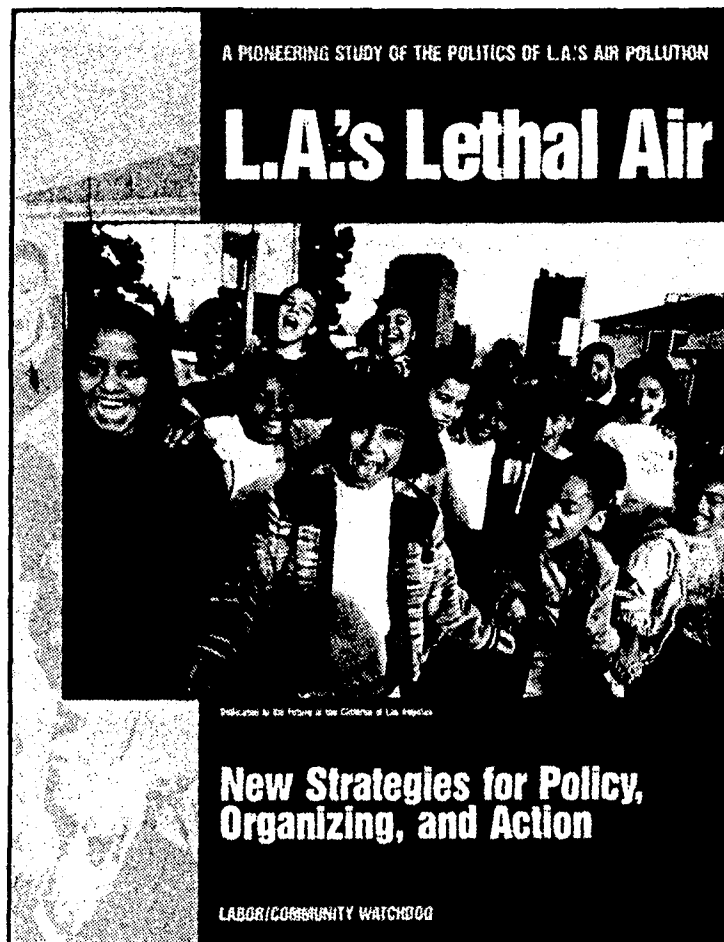
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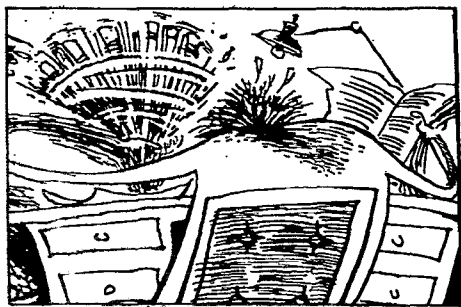
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L.A.'s Lethal Air has already been ordered in quantity by People of Color Environmental Summit, Greenpeace, Earth Island Institute, Hotel and Restaurant Workers, and UAW New Directions activists, and the staff of the South Coast Air Quality Management District. It is also being adopted for courses in environmental, urban and labor studies, African-American and Chicano studies, geography, political science and sociology.

LETTERS



carried forward not by the \$100 million that Perot has promised to spend on it but by the selfless effort of the Perot volunteers, who need no other reason for their zeal but what the title of the article says: "Ross for Boss? Just say yes!"

Michael Golomb
West Lafayette, Ind.

a dynamic, broad-based movement for progressive change.

Clark H. Coan
Lawrence, Kansas

Boss, man

IT SEEMS THAT ALEX MOLNAR THINKS THAT ROSS Perot's opposition to the Gulf War qualifies him to be president. (That would qualify a lot of us.) Perot has never held public office; he has never run for public office; he has participated in no debates and has received no votes. Bill Clinton has played by the rules, has suffered his "baptism by fire," has worked diligently and has proven himself. This slogan, "Ross for Boss," is moronic and frightening. After 12 years of Reagan and Bush, the last thing we need is a "Boss Perot." I cannot fathom liberals falling for another "cute" Ronald Reagan type who refuses to state his positions and plans. Bill Clinton has published a comprehensive "Plan for America's Future." You can get it from his office at P.O. Box 615, Little Rock, Ark. 72203.

Nancy Bey Little
Redwood City, Calif.

too quickly forget the maxim that correlation does not prove causation. The most persuasive and balanced view combines epidemiological data with experimental results and theoretical analysis of radiation damage mechanisms rather than dwelling upon a specific subset of data that supports one's prejudice.

Roland A. Finston
Palo Alto, Calif.

If not Perot, who?

ALEXANDER COCKBURN'S HIT PIECE ON PEROT (*ITT*, June 10) proves one thing: Cockburn inhales! With all the reference to Perot's well-known intolerance of drug use, perhaps Cockburn's immediate concern is of a more personal nature. As one who participates in the recreational use of a substance not yet sanctioned by our government, I, too, am troubled by Perot's participation in the "doomed to failure" drug war. However, the threat that Perot poses to my personal lifestyle is nothing new, as Cockburn would have us believe.

I, like many others, sense a degree of integrity in Perot that is as rare as the extinct dodo bird. On the other hand, there are signs that the species is making a comeback. Would Cockburn have us accept, as a viable alternative, the likes of Clinton or Bush? This is a "dodo" idea.

With the mainstream press SWAT team circling around Perot, isn't it sad that Cockburn has joined the team? In the final analysis, the election may come down to a lesser of three evils. For Cockburn, though, will it be the crook or the criminal? The suspense is killing me.

Ron Sherrin
Boxborough, Mass.

Grave checkers

MARK SCHNEIDER IN HIS "ROSS PEROT HAS POPULISTS TURNING IN THEIR GRAVES" (*ITT*, June 24) requests that a resident of Kansas "check those graves and calm the noble spirits buried out there." A friend in Wichita recently checked the grave of "Sockless" Jerry Simpson and found freshly disturbed soil with one lone sunflower proudly swaying in the wind. To the best of my knowledge, Mary "Yellin" Lease and "Little" Annie Diggs, two of the most prominent Populists, were not buried on the prairies of the Sunflower State.

The agrarian prairie fire ignited the most effective third party revolt in American history. The Populists sought to "agitate, educate and organize" in an effort to turn the government over to the people. We would be wise to follow their example by creating

More or less?

THAT LOW-LEVEL RADIATION MAY BE MORE DAMAGING than the experts claim (*ITT*, May 20) is appropriately contrasted with the view that it is harmless or even beneficial. Fellow readers deserve a more balanced presentation than that of Benjamin A. Goldman.

For example, Professor John Cameron, a respected medical physicist at the University of Wisconsin, presents the following data showing low-level radiation may be beneficial (*Physics Today*, March 1992):

1. Japanese A-bomb survivors exposed to moderate (0.5-5 rem) radiation had fewer cancer deaths than would be expected in comparison to those exposed to less than 0.5 rems. Survivors as a group have a longer average life than other Japanese, despite higher cancer death rates in those who received high doses.

2. U.S. citizens living in seven high background states have 15 percent fewer cancer deaths than the average in the U.S. A similar comparison in China found the cancer rate to be 50 percent lower in the high background population.

3. The mortality of nuclear shipyard workers was 24 percent lower than that of non-nuclear shipyard workers.

Doubtless an explanation will be found for these contradictory correlations. On both sides of the argument, protagonists

Mean testing

JOHN JUDIS' OFFHAND SUGGESTION THAT ENTITLEMENTS be reduced, "preferably through a means test" (*ITT*, June 10), is characteristic of neoliberal discussions of social policy in the mainstream press. Means-testing is presented as unproblematic, or, at best, defended by some reference to rich Social Security beneficiaries living in luxury. I would like to see Judis answer the following questions:

Why is poverty declining among the elderly and increasing among children? The most obvious answer is that the elderly are beneficiaries of non-means-tested entitlements (Social Security, welfare), while children are the beneficiaries of a complex array of means-tested benefits (AFDC, WIC, housing vouchers, Medicaid, etc.). Could it be that means-testing does not work and universal entitlements do work?

Furthermore, how is it possible to reconcile means-testing with American principles of citizenship? Anyone who has worked with means-tested programs knows that it is impossible to construct one that does not humiliate the recipient. Ask a legal aid lawyer to compare the treatment of clients in a food stamp office and a Social Security office.

Millions of Americans go hungry and allow their children to go hungry rather than suffer the indignity of applying for food stamps and displaying them publicly in the supermarket checkout line. Americans do not give up Social Security benefits for fear of being considered second-class citizens by their neighbors.

Judis' advocacy of means-testing sounds harmless, but what he is advocating is the mass humiliation of millions of Americans who now regard themselves as citizens, not paupers.

Jeff Cox
Iowa City, Iowa

UPI

SKIPP PORTEOUS' STORY ON PAT ROBERTSON AND UPI (*ITT*, June 10) was timed perfectly: The story was published on the day Robertson announced he would not purchase UPI. Porteous is the only writer who put together the connection among UPI, Robertson and the Christian Coalition. *Editor & Publisher*, a newspaper trade weekly, never brought up the Christian Coalition or Robertson's role within it. Nor did the rest of the corporate media.

The corporate media was saying, churches own newspapers, why can't Pat Robertson own UPI? Robertson would have turned UPI into a large-scale version of the *Sacramento Union*—a daily newspaper that slants the news to fit a fundamentalist agenda. The *Union's* religious bias is so blatant, the mayor of Sacramento canceled her subscription. (For details about the *Sacramento Union* and its right-wing religious slant, see the January-February 1991 *Columbia Journalism Review* or the January-February 1992 issue of *Extra!*.)

By the way: I happen to work within the corporate media—for a newspaper owned by a staunch supporter of George Bush.

Charles E. Everett
Bridgewater, N.J.

Just say "boss"

WHEN I SAW IN *THESE TIMES* COVER WITH THE headline "Ross for boss?" "Yes," says Alex Molnar (June 10). I was eagerly looking forward to seeing a respected author, commissioned by a respected journal, finally give us a reasoned account for why we should support Ross Perot's candidacy.

What a disappointment; what a letdown! Instead of an appraisal of Perot's qualifications for the presidency we got a vacuous diatribe against Bush ("sounding like a comic opera emperor") and Clinton (a "long-winded border-state politician") and "the cast of characters from Washington and Wall Street" who dare to criticize Perot and have nothing to offer but "self-serving analysis."

Not one word—not one—about what Perot would or could do to solve the nation's serious problems. Yes, there is a novel prognosis: "[I] fear that if either Bush or Clinton get elected ... there wouldn't be a political institution left that had any popular legitimacy, a situation ripe with totalitarian potential."

On the other hand, "Given this background [of "Perot making speeches pointing out that the U.S. was a democracy and that Congress and the people had to be involved in any decision to make war"], it is hard to take warnings ... about Perot the authoritarian [for] more than cynical double-talk." What perspicacity, what wisdom in these words!

The campaign for Ross, we are told, is

SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander

By James T. Sears

HE MOVES FROM LARRY KING LIVE TO THE *Today Show* delivering his no-nonsense message: If we want to take back America, we have to work together. There is going to be pain and sacrifice. Don't trust me; trust in yourself—trust in America. Telephone calls flood in from this patchwork American quilt: Tucson and Tampa, Cairo and Cincinnati, Manchester and Milwaukee. How would you solve the budget crisis? Is it true that you would eliminate Social Security for persons with incomes exceeding \$60,000? What is your position on gun control?

He peers into the camera lens and "talks turkey" to the people. But what does he say? "I'll cut \$100 billion here and \$100 billion there, and soon there will be no deficit." "I'll go to the American people with a plan, explain it in plain English and they can vote on it." Each week the media snips at his heels for specifics and inconsistencies. Every week his popularity increases.

"Give the man a break," a Cincinnati woman on welfare begs. "He's not a professional politician. He's only been thinking about these issues for a few months. He's a good man." A conservative Tucson businessman declares, "He's the take-charge leader we need." A radical professor proclaims, "So he has made millions through the defense industry. He is willing to talk to the masses and he is willing to listen."

American mayors are no less impressed. "What did Perot say specifically?" the media presses them. "No specifics. But he'll meet with us every month."

Ross Perot: American savior or the winner by discontent?

America is waiting for Perot, waiting for him to "announce" his candidacy, waiting for him to announce his vice-presidential running mate, waiting for him to spell out his program. We are waiting... but what exactly are we waiting for? Are we waiting for a can-do Texas CEO to ride into lobby-infested Washington and clean up town? Are we waiting for a real-life Mr. Smith to invite us to electronic town halls for weekly dialogue and decision-making? Are we waiting for a populist demagogue disguised as a small "d" democrat to reveal his monstrous form?

Questions abound: We are all waiting for Perot, but like Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*, we have no idea what he looks like, if we are waiting at the right spot or even if we have the right day or correct time. Waiting we engage in dialogue: Would I sacrifice my Social Security check for the sake of an unborn generation? What are our alternatives to the two party system? Will you help me collect petition signatures?

While spin-doctors, Washington journalists and think tank academics discuss the nuances of a Perot candidacy (Would a Democratically-controlled House abandon Clinton? Could House Speaker Thomas Foley become acting president?), we are reconsidering our role in "We the People." We are talking about sacrifice, reflecting on representative government, thinking of political

action.

Meanwhile, the nightly news continues its always different, never-changing journalistic rendition of Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire." The lyrics are new, but its chorus of alienation and chords of despair are not:

*Rodney King, S&L, ACT UP, Anita Hill
Desert Storm, Rio, Haitians nowhere to go
Drive-by shootings, homeless folks
Abortion rulings, kids on coke*

From decade to decade, events change, victims do not: the poor and the powerless, minorities and women, children and the elderly.

Some of these people have already joined Perot's "grass-roots" drive toward the presidency. In a North Carolina mill village, a man in his 70s sits at a card table near the town hall collecting petition signatures. A 13-year-old works after school at a phonebank. An Oregon lesbian posts pro-Perot messages on a computer bulletin board. An Orlando homemaker drives several older women to a high-tech Perot rally.

While many persons who plan to vote for Perot habitually trek to their polling places and while many who support Perot suffered little or even prospered during the Reagan-Bush era, there are Perot supporters who have never participated in a political campaign or who will cast their first vote in many an election. The unlikely marriage of these two groups distinguishes the Perot campaign from past third party presidential bids.

Waiting for Perot, we miss the epicenter of the Perot phenomenon. Throughout this election year, we have felt tremors along the fault line of governmental deceit, neglect, racial divisiveness and disempowerment. In November, the two party system will be shaken from its foundations. This electoral earthquake will transform the political landscape well beyond what Ross Perot and his key advisers could ever imagine.

The quake ahead: On a mid-summer night in 1992, we dream of magical solutions to our problems—we wait for Godot. By the winter of 1994, our discontent will have appeared: a 64-year-old billionaire unable to govern because of the inherent compromises required in politics, the hegemony of special interest groups and the public clamor for passage of conflicting legislation.

By the winter of '94, it will be clear that neither Perot nor anyone else can meet the

most to save the Soviet empire, so, too, will Perot, in his campaign to "Take Back America," awaken those who have never controlled America. Just as Gorbachov saw his reforms of the Soviet system lead to its dismantling, so, too, will the seismic wave of grass-roots democracy unleashed by the Perot election bring the facade of the "two party" American system and those elites who rule behind it crashing down.

Gorbachov did not appear out of a historical vacuum. As an instrument for change, he responded as best he could to forces set in motion generations ago. The Russian people suffered for four centuries under czarist rule and 75 years under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The response of the European peasants and bourgeoisie to increasingly corrupt, incestuous and dictatorial monarchies ushered in the revolutions of 1789, 1830 and 1848. From the ashes of those revolutions arose Bismarck and Metternich, Marx and Lenin, Gladstone and de Tocqueville, Hitler and Mussolini. Nationalism, communism, liberalism and fascism swept away the old monarchies, reconfigured the map of Europe and set the course for the new world order of the 20th century.

As one Russian generation begot another, deceit and neglect produced despair and alienation. Waiting for Lenin or Trotsky, the hopes for the October Revolution were swept away by the very forces that brought the world to war, the subsequent Allied intervention on behalf of the White Russians during the Civil War and the League of Nations. Under the iron hand of communism, the people toiled as a new governing elite emerged. The state, representing itself as the will of the people, exploited resources and overran countries, providing its people with both bread and pride. As the tentacles of communism reached around the globe, the core of the Soviet Empire rotted. As Gorbachov replaced Chernenko, the collapse of the empire was imminent. As an instrument of change, Gorbachov set in motion the final chain of events that led to the seemingly sudden and rapid fall of the Iron Curtain.

As the people of the world rise up for democracy—the young man challenging the tanks in Tiananmen Square, the crowds encircling the Russian White House during the failed August coup, the growing Thai middle class bloodied in the streets of Bangkok—are we so naïve to believe that America lies outside this political universe? Are we, like the detractors of Galileo, rooted in the belief that America rests at the center of this universe unaffected by the motion of other cosmic forces?

The critical lesson of *Waiting for Godot* is that we assume the individual rests at the center of the universe rather than recognize that the universe does not act according to individual plans or whims but acts in accordance with transcendent principles beyond the comprehension and certainly the control of humans. The critical lessons of "Waiting for Perot" is that while we look for a deliverer who can never come, we blind ourselves to those historic forces that will reshape the new millennium providing us an entirely different understanding of the New World Order. The wait for a savior is naïve; the hope of salvation is an illusion.

We do not live in a compliant world. We live in a chaotic one.

James T. Sears teaches at the University of South Carolina-Columbia.

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By the winter of '94, it will be clear that Perot cannot meet the growing expectation for systemic change.

level of a growing grass-roots expectation for systemic change. These pent-up forces, awakened by the promise of a Perot presidency and angered by the wait for Perot to arrive at their political spot on their timetable, will unleash the long-forecast political earthquake that will revolutionize America. In much the same way as Mikhail Gorbachov ushered in the era of perestroika and glas-

Subverting the mainstream media

By Susan Douglas

IT ISN'T QUITE AS EASY, OR AS MUCH FUN, TO BASH the mainstream press these days. (Well, there's always Barbara Walters and Dan Rather, but more on them later.) The *New York Times*, for example, fed up with Bush and freaked out over Perot, has actually started inching away from the neocon heights it achieved in the '80s and turning—dare I say it—liberal. The *Times* has been needling George Bush for months with front-page stories about his bumbling, incoherent 5:00 a.m. walkabouts with Barbara through the cherry trees and snide analyses of his non-existent environmental policies.

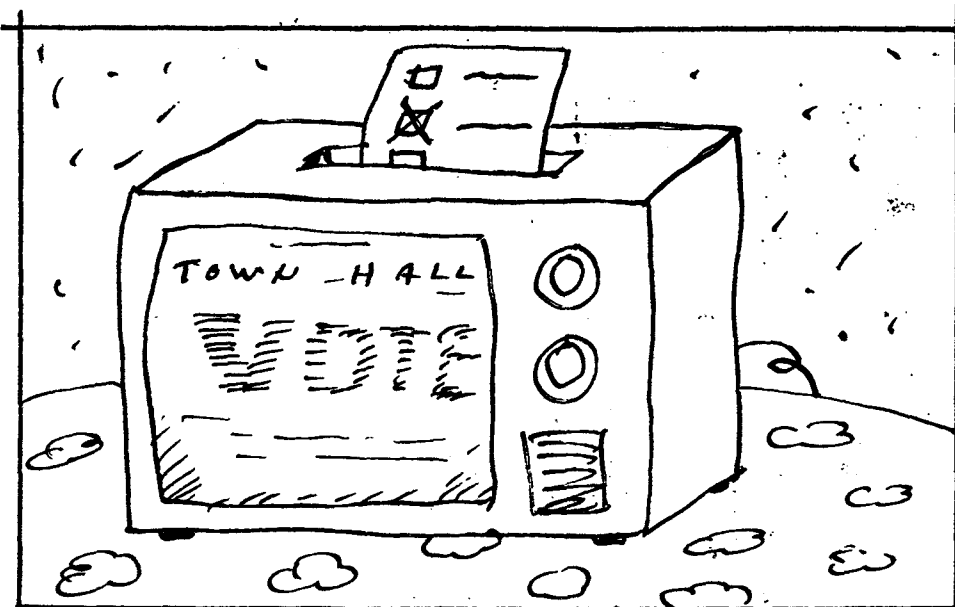
The paper of record has also been going after Ross Perot with a panicked zeal, showcasing exposés on his alleged \$50 million deals with the Nixon administration, his use of public funds to finance one of the most expensive new airports of the '80s and his exploitation of the POW and MIA situation in Vietnam to further his own business interests in Southeast Asia. The *Times* has even had front-page stories with charts and graphs on how, under Reagan-Bush, the rich got richer and the poor got poorer.

Sure, we're still subjected to journalists (sic) such as what-kind-of-a-tree-would-you-be Walters and her fawning are-you-really-perfect interview of Perot on 20/20 in May. But we are also seeing more adversarial journalism than we have in the past 12 years. What's really going on here, and why is the press rousing itself out of its long, Reagan-induced torpor? We are, in fact, witnessing some genuine anxiety in mainstream news organizations about their roles as gatekeepers and opinion leaders. The rise of Ross Perot doesn't just mean that a Texas billionaire who still

The new media populism has precipitated an odd role reversal in which news shows emphasize image and talk shows, within an entertainment format, make space for substance.

uses Butch Wax on his hair could actually buy the presidency; it could also mean that the mainstream news media have become irrelevant.

This is why Perot's media strategy is currently the hottest topic of the campaign, and why the press, especially the elite press, is starting to pull out the long knives. They feature stories almost daily about how Perot and Clinton are circumventing the news media and suggest that these tactics are a bit dangerous to the future of our "democratic system." But this newfound concern about democracy is simply a smokescreen masking the rather anti-democratic class anxieties of the elite press over the jealously guarded, agenda-setting privileges that they have, in fact, seriously abused. Where was the mainstream media's



concern about democracy during, say, the Iran-contra scandal?

Not just talk: The news media in the '80s relentlessly presented an exclusionary, white, upper-middle-class, male worldview, filled with white, upper-middle-class male newsmakers, reporters and analysts. As a result, TV audiences had to look elsewhere for diversity, debate and analysis—and for the chance to have a voice in contemporary cultural trends. A Johnny Carson monologue often contained more biting—and honest—political commentary than any news show. And whatever one thinks of Phil Donahue, his show, in addition to providing a forum for Satan worshippers and moms who date their nephews, also featured highly illuminating discussions about Tiananmen Square, analyses of contemporary feminism and debates over national health care.

Pretty soon, everyone had a talk show, all premised on a kind of defiant populism that gave ordinary (and sometimes bizarre) people access to the media soapbox. Talk shows actively solicited audience opinions, and suggested that by watching them one was involved in a form of participatory democracy. Whoever has been advising Perot took note of this, as well as of the decline in newspaper readership (especially among those under 30), and the rising cynicism about the top-down, elitist, anti-populist news media.

The fact that Larry King or Arsenio Hall might be more influential than the *New York Times* has the paper squirming and quoting academics who assert that politicians prefer the talk shows because talk show hosts don't ask tough questions the way Dan Rather does. (Dan to Perot: Will you say to the people, "Read my lips; no new taxes"? Perot: "Hey, I'm not that dumb." End of "tough questions.") But we all know what journalists on the nightly news shows really do: They distort what you say, put words in your mouth, only give you a nine-second soundbite, and are more concerned with whether you once smoked pot or like broccoli than with whether you have any concrete policy proposals. On the talk shows, on the other hand, you actually get to talk.

All the fluff that's fit to print: This new media populism has precipitated an odd role reversal in which news shows emphasize image and talk shows, within an entertainment format, make space for substance. Let's take Bill Clinton's appearance on the *Arsenio Hall Show*. Although the Democratic candidate spoke in very general terms, the show's

format and its host gave Clinton the opportunity to tick off a list of education reforms he would propose and to argue that rich people like Arsenio had to pay higher taxes. He was frequently interrupted by enthusiastic applause over these policy proposals. He got one of his biggest hands when he asserted that it was ridiculous that the news media thought his "I didn't inhale" gaffe was more important than any of his political positions.

The *Times*, however, paid no attention to what Clinton said and instead sought to dismiss the event by giving front-page coverage to a picture of Clinton playing the saxophone

on the show. If you watched *Arsenio*, at least you got a little meat; if you just read the *Times*, all you got was meringue laced with a touch of bile. Which one was news and which one was entertainment?

Media-ocracy? People are tired of being treated like passive, image-obsessed irrelevant morons. They are tired of media gatekeepers who keep them at a distance and allow them only the briefest peeks at national leaders and the political process. And Ross Perot and his advisers know it. This is why his interviews are laced with populist "we the people" rhetoric, and why he's proposing to govern the country in part through "electronic town hall" TV shows.

This kind of populism terrifies the elite media: It circumvents the press and raises the specter of "the masses," as opposed to an elite corps of the citizenry, governing the country. In a *Times* editorial on Perot's electronic town hall, Anthony Lewis warned that "the opportunities for manipulation are overwhelming" and, with references to Mussolini, suggested that Perot represents a neofascist threat. Since Perot himself is nothing if not a top-down, authoritarian, arrogant kind of guy, I tend to share Lewis' concerns. But let's cut through the self-righteous journalistic hypocrisy here and remember how the media's own self-satisfied, anti-democratic, bash-the-left, bash-unions and bash-women coverage in recent years have fueled the new media populism. Hmm, maybe it is still as easy to bash the elite press after all.

Susan Douglas is a frequent contributor to *In These Times*.

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Citadel Underground...Challenging Consensus Reality Since 1990

Dream on: East bloc falls, West left stalls

By Daniel Lazare

ON THE HEELS OF LAST SUMMER'S FAILED coup in Moscow, *In These Times* editor James Weinstein rushed into print with a front-page editorial hailing the collapse as the greatest thing since Lincoln freed the slaves. Declared Jim: "Just as the coup was bad news for the left in both the Soviet Union and the United States, its collapse is good news for advocates of social reform in both countries. When the Soviet people rose up to defend democracy and defeat reactionaries at home, they also dealt a blow to hardliners abroad—especially those in the United States who trade in imagined social threats."

Less than 12 months later, sentiments like these sound positively quaint. Not only are the same old hardliners still in power in the U.S., but the postcoup social reforms in the ex-U.S.S.R. have turned out to consist chiefly of unemployment, hyperinflation and nationalist fragmentation. Meanwhile, the heady optimism in social democratic circles has completely vanished. Rather than being borne forward on a great popular upsurge as Weinstein indicated they would, social dems have found themselves caught up in a slow-motion collapse of their own. In the former Soviet Union, advocates of Euro-style mixed economies are on the defensive hardly less than the Communist old

guard. In Sweden, a country synonymous with social democracy, they recently suffered their worst electoral defeat in 60 years at the hands of a free-market coalition.

In France, Francois Mitterrand's Socialists turned in their worst performance in 23 years in regional elections this March, forcing Mitterrand to fire his increasingly unpopular prime minister, Edith Cresson. In Germany, social democrats lost ground in state elections in early April, while Bettino Craxi's social democrats in Italy suffered significant erosion at the polls in elections around the same time that also saw impressive gains for the far right. In Britain, Labor confounded the pollsters by handing the Tories their fourth electoral victory in a row, the right's longest winning streak since the age of Napoleon.

In the United States, where social-democratic influence is hardly more than marginal, the rout has been even worse. Liberal hopes for a post-Cold War "peace dividend" to fuel social spending have been dashed. Jerry Brown, the latest and least convincing great left hope, has fizzled on the campaign trail. A strike by the social-democratic United Auto Workers against the Caterpillar tractor company collapsed ignominiously when management began hiring scabs, while H. Ross Perot has injected an ominous note of authoritarianism into the body politic. On what used to be called the intel-

lectual front, erstwhile leftists like Richard Rorty now declare that "the only hope for getting the money necessary to eliminate intolerable inequities is to facilitate the activities of people like ... Donald Trump," i.e. to stimulate more capitalist inequality now so that we may have less later on. (For a fuller appreciation of this intellectual disintegration, see Rorty's article in the May 1992 *Harper's*.)

These are the sort of tectonic shifts that should send social democrats back to their ideological drawing boards. What it suggests, simply, is that in cheering the demise of Soviet power, they got it backward. Rather than opening the door to socialist renewal, the Boris Yeltsin counter-coup opened the door to the opposite—a conservative flood that, having swept away the remnants of the Brezhnevite old guard, is now lapping at the feet of more reformist elements. Rather than shaping and controlling this flood, social democrats have so far been proven helpless to do anything about it. After years of distancing themselves from the Kremlin bureaucracy, they now find themselves drenched by precisely the same tide.

Part of the reason is a political dogma grown so rigid and unrealistic over the years as to recall Stalinist excesses of the '30s and '40s. Confronted by the highly publicized struggle between pro-Western dissidents like Andrei Sakharov and Anatoly (now Natan) Sharansky and the Kremlin bureaucracy in the '70s, they ignored all evidence that what was underway was anything but a modern morality play between good and evil. Enthusiastically cheering on the self-proclaimed democratic reform movement of the '80s, they ignored evidence of growing clerical influence in places like Poland, of the rising popularity of right-wing economic ideas, of Reagan- and Thatcher-worship, of any and everything, in other words, that indicated that the movement was not as progressive as it claimed to be.

The result is a bit like closing your eyes as you step in front of a speeding bus. Even the most dedicated social-democratic apparatchik is apt to suffer a crisis of confidence.

Not that a crisis of confidence is bad, of course, if it leads to something more honest and realistic. For all those who believe in looking both ways before stepping off the curb, here are three theses concerning Soviet power and Western social democracy's role in its demise.

Thesis No. 1: By exaggerating the negative aspects of the Soviet regime and denigrating the positive ones, social democrats not only greased the skids for the removal of the Soviet bureaucracy but for their own as well.

Of course, the Kremlin bureaucracy was suffocating and undemocratic. Of course, its methods were brutal and coarse. But in an ex-Soviet Union crawling with monarchists, fascists and ethnic demagogues of every sort, it's now clear that the Soviet state was fighting for its life at the hands of a growing threat from the right. The barbarians were at the gate, in a sense, in the form of Ukrainian nationalists, Baltic

separatists, Zionists, Islamic fundamentalists, and so on, and the Kremlin party bosses were trying desperately to keep them out. Their reactionary, neo-Stalinist methods doomed them to failure. But that doesn't make the consequences—e.g. brutal ethnic warfare in Yugoslavia, nationalist conflict in the Caucasus, Moldova and Nagorno-Karabakh, a growing threat of war between Russia and the Ukraine and between Russia and Turkey over Armenia, etc.—any less catastrophic.

Nor does it excuse groups like the Campaign for Peace and Democracy which egged on highly dangerous forces like Baltic separatism and now refuse to take responsibility for the consequences.

Thesis No. 2: Western social democrats exaggerated their own power while systematically denigrating the Soviet Union's international role as well.

In the '20s, European governments that previously hadn't given a fig for social reforms quickly changed their minds in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution—not because they were worried about what social democratic parliamentarians might say but because they were terrified that local reds would slaughter them in their beds. In the '50s and '60s, the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations opened the doors a crack to civil rights not because they were worried about criticism from *Dissent* and the then-liberal *New York Post*, but, as sociologist Jim Petras points out, because they were increasingly worried about how further official foot-dragging would play internationally, particularly before the largely black and brown members of the nascent Nonaligned Movement, where Soviet influence was growing.

The Soviet Union, in other words, was a colossus not only of the Cold War but, in a way that social democrats consistently failed to recognize, of social reform. When Southern sheriffs denounced integrated water fountains as a commie plot, they were, in effect, paying tribute to the U.S.S.R.'s role in this regard. Ronald Reagan's oft-cited fantasy of taking Soviet leaders on a helicopter tour of workers' homes in Southern California, with their swimming pools and two-car garages, was a similar back-handed compliment. At a time when virtually every last detail of social policy was shaped by the U.S.-Soviet conflict, it was the capitalist class' way of acknowledging that it would never have had to be so generous were it not for competition from the Soviets.

This is despite the increasingly repressive nature of the Soviet Union itself. Perhaps the best analogy was that offered by Trotsky in 1940. The Soviet Union of Stalin and his successors, he argued, was analogous to a conservative labor union—the Teamsters, perhaps—which, however autocratic and corrupt, nonetheless exerts upward pressure on wage rates almost despite itself. If the union disintegrates under pressure from employers, it shouldn't be surprising if wages and working conditions deteriorate with it. This doesn't make working-class heroes out of Teamster bureaucrats, but it does underscore the difference between a right- and left-wing solution to political decay in either a trade union or a workers' state.

Thesis No. 3: "First them, then us" didn't work in 1933 and is not going to work in '92.

Of course, there's always the highly op-

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BY CARL MARZANI

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timistic, "I'm-OK-You're-OK" school of thought which says "yes" to all of the above, but insists that a sojourn on the right is part of a learning process leading someday to a higher socialism in a more democratic form.

Not only is this extremely passive, but it's also curiously reminiscent of the line laid by Stalin some 60 years ago during the rise of Nazism. In a nutshell, Stalin's advice

to the German proletariat was not to worry because Nazism was simply the latest and most dramatic symptom of capitalist decay. Once Hitler took care of the social democrats, he would crumple under the weight of his own contradictions, whereupon Communists would emerge from their hiding places and take care of him.

The theory proved half right in that Hitler did round up the social democrats upon

taking power in 1933. But he rounded up thousands of Communists as well, leaving it to the two factions to sort out their differences from behind the barbed wire of the first Nazi concentration camps. These days, instead of Communists engaging in self-defeating sectarianism, we have social democrats proclaiming, in effect, "first Yeltsin, then us" — suggesting, in other words, that once the Brezhnevite old guard has been

swept away, their turn will come to pick up the pieces.

History, however, seems to have other things in mind. As George Bernard Shaw once advised, social democrats are learning that sometimes the worst thing that can happen in life is to have one's fondest dream come true. Having worked tirelessly to dismantle Soviet power, they are now finding the consequences far less pleasant than they imagined. ■

Reality check: Old ideology blind to new possibilities

By James Weinstein

LIKE THE LEADERS OF THE FORMER Communist Party in the Soviet Union, Daniel Lazare thinks that he knows what's best for the people the party once lorded over. "Of course," he writes, the Communist Party's "methods were brutal and coarse" (at this point he could hardly say less), but "in an ex-Soviet Union crawling with monarchists, fascists and ethnic demagogues of every sort, it's now clear that the Soviet state was fighting for its life against a growing threat from the right."

Strangely, however, Lazare seems unable to understand why these malignant forces remained so pervasive 70-odd years after the revolution of 1917 or why a vast majority preferred them to Communist rule. Indeed, his argument reminds me of Stalin's 1949 thesis about class struggle under socialism. Stalin argued that as socialism developed, class differences in Soviet society had not gradually dissolved, as earlier Soviet theorists expected, but had increased. His thesis was then used to justify tighter surveillance and control of all aspects of Soviet life.

I read this in the early '50s, when I was a member of the American Communist Party. But even then I wondered how popular opposition to a socialist government could increase if the party had been securely in power for any length of time. To me, socialism meant an extension of political democracy into the economic sphere. It seemed logical, therefore, that class hostilities would gradually diminish as democratic practices increased and people enjoyed the benefits of a more egalitarian society.

The seeming contradiction in Stalin's thesis pointed down a path that led me out of the party a few years later. My belief in socialism had not been shaken, but I came to understand why Lenin had insisted in 1917 that the revolution could not survive unless it spread quickly to the West.

Lenin's bleak view of the prospects for socialism in Soviet Russia had two bases: First, all socialists before 1917 believed that socialism was possible only in the more advanced capitalist countries, where the necessary level of industrial development had already taken place. Second, by definition, socialism required an active working class that had matured in the process of struggling for political and trade union

rights. Otherwise, the workers would not be prepared for governance and the country would lack a public capable of participating in the affairs of state. Britain and the U.S. met these two conditions—or so Lenin believed. But Russia was only on the threshold of industrial development, and the Russian working class—a tiny minority of the population—had not yet won even the most rudimentary democratic rights.

Facing reality: Divided by myriad ethnic and class hostilities, the Russian empire had been held together only by a despotic czarist regime that ruled with an iron fist. The vast majority of its population were illiterate peasants with no history of participation in civil society. So when the revolution did not spread to the West, the Bolsheviks faced a dilemma: Should they admit failure and give up power, or should they hold on to power and use the party and the state as a surrogate for the capitalist class in a process of forced industrialization that might some day provide the basis for socialism?

The result was a regime that embodied some of the principles of socialism but whose method of rule more closely resembled a feudal autocracy. Under this czarist socialism, at a stunning human cost, the Soviet Union did industrialize rapidly—more rapidly, in fact, than any pre-World War II capitalist country.

The method, however, included not only the suppression of all civil liberties, but also of religion and of ethnic identities. Hostilities and conflicts that existed under the czar were not resolved through participation in a democratic polity, but were suppressed, often brutally. The party, which continued to claim it was of the working class, became the instrument of its suppression. Nevertheless, the system worked as long as the material standard of living kept improving—which it did until further progress required individual initiative, open communications and workforce autonomy. And it worked as long as the Cold War provided an external danger to justify the perpetual denial of civic freedoms.

End of an era: By the mid-'80s reform had become imperative. But the loosening of restraints under glasnost unleashed 70 years of pent-up feelings. Seething with resentment, contempt and anger, and facing an entrenched bureaucracy refusing to give up its corrupt privileges despite Mikhail Gorbachov's attempts at perestroika, the Soviet people turned on the Communist

Party. Everything associated in their minds with "real existing socialism" became anathema.

The result is the situation that Lazare decries, but which he attributes to muddled-headed social democrats, rather than to the party that created its own gravediggers. He prefers Communist rule in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to the triumph of "highly dangerous forces like Baltic separatism." Unable to understand that 50 years of oppressive rule had led the overwhelming majority of Baltic peoples—including even a majority of ethnic Russians—to fight for separation from their former masters, he would deny them this right in the name of order. -

The triumph of the ill: Lazare's nostalgia for the good old days of Communist stability rests on ideology rather than history. Ironically, he posits a rigid social-democratic dogma as blinding a very mixed bag of culprits to the consequences of reform in the former Soviet bloc, but it's his own arguments that are rigidly ideological.

Consider his reading of my editorial last summer: He accuses me of predicting that Russian social democrats would quickly be "borne forward on a great popular upsurge." But I actually wrote that "how things will develop in the coming months cannot be predicted," because "in the immediate aftermath of the Communist Party's collapse, the greatest danger flows from the unleashing of ethnic resentments and hostilities suppressed but not resolved by 70 years of often-malevolent paternalism."

With "the lid now off," I concluded, "all the old discontents are being acted out in an orgy of revenge that could cripple the republics as well as the Union." Not a bad prediction, it seems to me.

Or consider Lazare's silly statement about the Russian Revolution spurring governments "that previously hadn't given a fig for social reforms" to quickly change their minds in the wake of the Bolshevik seizure of power. In a triumph of his own ideology over history, Lazare forgets that the groundbreaking social reforms in Germany took place in the 1870s—almost 50 years before 1917—when Bismarck tried to slow the growth of the German Social Democratic Party as well as trade unions by instituting social insurance and other reforms. Similarly, Lazare neglects to mention that in the U.S., the first major wave of modern social reform occurred during the Progressive Era, before the U.S. entered World War I in 1917.

And he also forgets that instead of reforms in the wake of the Russian Revolution we had the notorious Palmer Raids—and the deportation of thousands of radical immigrants. And these raids were followed by a period of fierce attacks on trade union gains made before and during the war. Indeed, it took 12 years (not Lazare's almost

12 months) of Republican rule and then the Great Depression to bring social reform back to this country.

The same was true in Europe. The aftermath of the Russian Revolution produced Mussolini and fascism in Italy in 1922, the rise of Hitler and the Nazis in Germany in the late '20s and the entrenchment of a series of other right-wing regimes on the Continent.

Finally, consider Lazare's wonderfully triumphant discovery that "the hardliners are still in power in the U.S." Is this supposed to mean that we deluded "social democrats" expected George Bush to be removed from office because the Soviet coup was defeated? Or does he believe that historic developments are supposed to work themselves out overnight? Or is this just his way of ignoring the rapid opening up of our political system that is beginning to occur?

Ideological blinders: The really disturbing thing about Lazare's piece is the way his nostalgia for the good old days of Soviet Communism blinds him to the political turmoil and popular discontent that has erupted both in Europe and the U.S. in the aftermath of the Cold War. Not only are the leaders of both our major parties increasingly unpopular, but a total outsider would win the presidential election if it were held today—or so the polls tell us.

This change in itself is not particularly good news. Ross Perot is not Eugene V. Debs, and the public's eager embrace of this savior presents more dangers than opportunities. But Perot himself is less important than what the Perot phenomenon says about popular discontent with politics as usual.

Furthermore, less than 12 months since the coup there have already been indications of democratic gains. Liberal women candidates for U.S. Senate have won unprecedented primary victories in three states. Dozens of House members and an abnormally large number of senators have decided not to seek re-election. The new Congress may well have a substantially greater left contingent than does the current one.

In short, while the American political landscape is changing before our eyes, Lazare has his blinders on. He can see only what lies directly in front of him—and not all of that. Nor can he see that if the coup had succeeded—as he apparently wishes it had—the Cold War would be back on the front burner, Bush's prospects for re-election would be bright, and the popular desire for domestic reform would be squelched.

Instead, all the suppressed issues of the Cold War years are now on the political agenda. We live on new terrain that presents unforeseeable opportunities for the left. But we can't move forward by clinging to our nostalgia for a failed attempt to create a viable socialist society. ■



EXHIBITS

The Jewish Museum

Cataloging the odyssey of black-Jewish relations

Bridges and Boundaries: African-Americans and American Jews

New York Historical Society

By Kevin J. Kelley

FROM "HYMIETOWN" TO Crown Heights, recent flash-points in the ongoing conflict between the Jewish-American and African-American communities have been numerous and super-heated. Wars of words—and sometimes worse—have been waged by the likes of Leonard Jeffries, a black professor notorious for his tirades against "rich Jews," and Michael Levin, a Jewish professor infamous for his claim that whites are generally more intelligent than blacks.

Although the wounds are raw indeed these days, African- and Jewish-Americans have actually been lashing one another for quite a long time. The pain was so public and so intense by 1969 that *Time* magazine carried a cover story that year entitled, "Black vs. Jew: A Tragic Confrontation." This was in the aftermath of the bitter battle in a Brooklyn school district in which the largely Jewish teachers' union was pitted against a mainly black community board. Anger was also still simmering at that time over condemnations of Israel by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, which many Jewish activists had earlier joined in support of black civil rights.

The struggles between the two groups have attracted so much at-

tention in part because both blacks and Jews are historically oppressed peoples who once were closely allied in fighting discrimination. Jews and blacks may also serve as what writer Letty Cottin Pogrebin calls "surrogate combatants for the bigots in the dominant culture."

Then, too, blacks and Jews are hardly the only pieces of the American mosaic that sometimes rub roughly against one another. How smooth has the fit been among Chicanos, Anglos and Native Americans in the Southwest, for example? It can be argued as well that Jews may even have been comparatively less racist than Italians, Irish and WASPs in the U.S. And it may be, judging from recent events in Los Angeles and New York, that Korean-Americans and Arab-Americans will soon supplant Jews as a focus of resentment within poor black communities.

Still, *Time* magazine's assessment of more than 20 years ago continues to resonate with the ring of truth. The confrontation between black and Jew does exhibit all the characteristics of a tragedy—a uniquely American tragedy that has been particularly disastrous for the left in this country.

Much at stake: James Farmer identifies the special political significance of this sad, wrenching story in his foreword to the catalog accompanying a current exhibit on black-Jewish relations in the U.S. "What has happened is more than erstwhile friends having had a falling out," writes Farmer, a black historian and former civil-rights leader. "It

cuts deeper than two collaborators having come upon a few disagreements. What has happened, instead, has been more like a shattering of the structure of power in the Democratic Party and a rupturing of the instruments of progressive social change within this nation.

"It is difficult to overestimate the impact of the widening rift between African-Americans and American Jews."

While this rift will surely not be healed any time soon, the catalog and the exhibit, both entitled "Bridges and Boundaries: African-Americans and American-Jews," perform an enormous service by at least clarifying the nature of the dispute and by cogently examining its complicated history. A divide that cannot possibly be closed until each side understands the grievances and empathizes with the sorrows of the other. With this show, organized jointly by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Jewish Museum in New York, that process has begun. The exhibit closes at the New York Historical Society in mid-July. It travels next to San Francisco, then to Rochester, N.Y.; Wilberforce, Ohio; Los Angeles and Philadelphia, before ending its tour in Chicago in mid-1994.

Although "Bridges and Boundaries" is not an art exhibit per se, it does include works by such well-known painters as Ben Shahn, Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden and Hugo Gellert. Scores of photographs are also on display, along with letters, posters, newspaper clippings and artifacts, as well as film and television footage. Planning for the show began four years ago, and it is clear that very careful thought was given to its organization and emphases.

The curators have arranged the material into five sections, or "places"—actual and figurative—where the odysseys of African-Americans and Jewish-Americans have intersected. By going back to the beginning of the encounter between the two peoples, the exhibit conveys a rich sense of the cooperation, as well as the animosity, that has marked the relationship.

Roots: The first section, called "Let My People Go," traces the spiritual affinities of blacks and Jews. The exhibit notes, for instance, that the biblical account of the Jews' exodus from slavery in Egypt served as an inspiration to African-Americans in their own quest for emancipation. In the book of Exodus, the show further points out, the children of Israel are described as "a mixed multitude" encompassing all races. We are told, too, that the 60 black Jewish congregations now active in the U.S. believe themselves to be descended from that multitude.

The similarity between Marcus Garvey's back-to-Africa movement and Jewish Zionism is likewise highlighted. Many members of both groups, weary of persecution in their

respective diasporas, yearned for the security and freedom of a homeland of their own. And it was migrations to some more favorable place that had brought blacks and Jews into close contact in the U.S.—African-Americans leaving the Jim Crow South for the comparatively prosperous cities of the North, and European Jews fleeing the pogroms of the Old World for the promised tolerance of New York and Chicago.

At first, Jews and blacks made common cause against the racism and anti-Semitism they found to be flourishing in what were supposed to be places of refuge. The NAACP was founded in 1909, followed two years later by the launch of the American Jewish Committee. Besides campaigning against prejudicial exclusion from jobs and housing, both of the anti-discrimination groups had to contend with murderous violence.

Some of the most harrowing images in the exhibit are its photographs of lynching victims in the Deep South. Black men are shown strung from trees, their contorted bodies sometimes charred as well, while mobs of whites grin stupidly at the camera. Here, too, is the swaying corpse of the blindfolded Leo Frank, a Jewish factory manager lynched in Georgia in 1915. A nearby panel lists the names of several blacks who were hung that same year, adding that the identities of a few other murdered African-Americans remain unknown.

Such violence served to reinforce the solidarity of what Farmer describes as a "community of sufferers." As late as 1928, the *Chicago Defender*, a leading African-American newspaper, was declaring: "In this country, persecuting the Jews was a favorite pastime that ranked with persecuting the Race."

Black-Jewish links were also strengthened by the U.S. Communist Party's involvement in the Scottsboro case. Jewish attorneys and activists associated with the party worked to free nine Alabama black men who, in 1931, were accused of raping two white women.

But tensions were simultaneously growing as well. The show notes that Jews had become pre-eminent figures in the early film industry, while Hollywood was subjecting blacks to racist ridicule and generally refusing to integrate the studios and movie casts. In 1935, the NAACP and the Communist Party staged competing anti-lynching exhibits in New York. And by then, blacks had begun boycotting some Jewish-owned stores in Harlem under the slogan, "Don't buy where you can't work."

The political and ethical attitudes binding Jews and blacks were still stronger, however, than the strains pulling them apart. In the late '50s and early '60s, as the civil-rights movement gained momentum, the two minority groups had forged a "Grand Alliance." Large numbers of

Jews took part in Martin Luther King's 1963 march on Washington. A year later, advocates of equality the world over mourned the murders in Mississippi of a black and two Jews who died together in the cause of simple democracy.

Recent troubles downplayed:

That may have been one of the last times almost all Jews and blacks would join hands unreservedly in pursuit of common objectives. From the mid-'60s onward, divergences of interests and attitudes tore asunder the Grand Alliance. "Bridges and Boundaries" does not ignore the controversies of the past 25 years, but it does not dwell upon them, either. The show and catalog recount the pivotal 1968 teachers strike in Brooklyn's Ocean Hill-Brownsville district, along with subsequent sore points such as the 1979 firing of then-U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young as a result of his unauthorized contacts with representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Perhaps the curators assumed that the furors of the past few years are too fresh to require an in-depth examination. Rather than focusing on the remarks of Louis Farrakhan or on some Jewish intellectuals' opposition to affirmative action, the show concludes with a room of contemporary artworks that suggest hatred can be transcended through conscience and compassion.

Despite this upbeat coda, "Bridges and Boundaries" does not try to send viewers out of the gallery with a naively optimistic sense that Jews and blacks will surely overcome their divisions one day. It is, in fact, impossible to forget everything that has come before this last room. A spiritual exhaustion and a profound sadness are what's felt most keenly on the way home.

The exhibit offers no specific prescriptions for the future. Visitors must instead think for themselves about how to proceed from here. I found a 1946 essay by black sociologist Kenneth Clark, reprinted in the catalog, to be particularly wise.

It is itself a telling commentary that Clark's "Candor About Negro-Jewish Relations" originally appeared in *Commentary* magazine, a then-liberal publication that has since become the leading voice of Jewish neoconservatism. Almost half a century ago, Clark wrote: "The seriousness of the threat that these, our still unresolved problems, present may well demand a much more resolute effort to discard traditional group loyalties, or at least to submerge them in larger group loyalties, as a prerequisite to their solution. Loyalty to mankind may have to be given priority over all other loyalties. If this cannot be, Jews and Negroes may be merely two among the many human casualties of history." ■

Kevin J. Kelley is a freelance writer and editor of *Toward Freedom*.

One actress, many voices: A study of racial conflict

Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn and Other Identities

By Anna Deavere Smith
Joseph Papp Public Theater,
New York

By Norman Oder

I'VE BEEN PUTTING TOGETHER fractured realities for a long time," says actress playwright Anna Deavere Smith. And if ever there was a fractured reality, it's in Crown Heights, the Brooklyn neighborhood where tensions between blacks and Hasidic Jews combust last August after a car driven by a

THEATER

Hasidic man killed a black child.

Smith illuminates those realities in *Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn and Other Identities*, a mesmerizing one-woman show, at New York's Joseph Papp Public Theater, in which she impersonates—nearly inhabits—26 characters, blacks and Jews, young and old, presenting verbatim excerpts from interviews.

A spark, an explosion: The Crown Heights conflict began after a car in the motorcade of Lubavitch Grand Rebbe Menachem Schneerson hit another and swerved onto the sidewalk, killing young Gavin Cato and injuring his sister. Various parties disputed the driver's level of negligence as well as the response of a private Hasidic ambulance and the police.

Three hours later, as anger spread, a group of 20 blacks surrounded and stabbed to death Yankel Rosenbaum, a Hasidic scholar visiting from Australia. The driver left for Israel the next day, and days of rock-throwing riots ensued. Protests continued long after a massive police presence stabilized the neighborhood. But a longstanding tension, based in black concerns about Hasidic manipulation of city resources and Hasidic fears of black crime, amplified by a huge cultural gulf, has hardly subsided.

Smith, who interviewed more than 50 people, wisely does not attempt to locate a single truth in the chorus of voices. She begins almost obliquely, avoiding Crown Heights for the first third of the show, setting the scene with words from blacks and Jews about race and identity.

The African-American actress' initial selection of characters seems weighted a bit toward prominent blacks (Angela Davis, director George Wolfe, controversial black studies Professor Leonard Jeffries), but her ability to invoke a character with slight physical and vocal inflections is gripping. She shifts from a deep-voiced Rev. Al Sharpton, legs splayed,

defending his hairstyle as an homage to James Brown, to a gentle Hasidic woman, donning a long sweater, voicing conflicting feelings about the ritual use of wigs.

Smith later mimics the earnest voice of author Letty Cottin Pogrebin, who asserts, "Jews and blacks are still near enough to reach," then dons a bow tie to present Minister Conrad Muhammad of the Nation of Islam, who catalogs the depredations of slavery, then ups the ante: "The Holocaust in no way equals slavery." Smith returns to Pogrebin, reading, with as even a voice as she can muster, about her cousin Isaac, who, to survive the Nazi gas chambers, sunk to the uttermost depths. The message is clear: Neither group can trump the other's historical oppression.

"Lousy language": The set is spare but effective: a few chairs and a table, a black wall of jagged mirrors and a place to project the character's name and topic. When Smith moves to Crown Heights, a series of photos from the protests—the black-hatted Hasids, the helmeted police and the black youths looking so alien from each other—and dissonant music hint at the conflict.

"We have lousy language," says a New York City Human Rights commissioner, and the interviewees bear that out. A black-hatted Hasidic rabbi complains that no blacks expressed remorse over Rosenbaum's killing. A Caribbean cleric complains about how the Rebbe always gets a police escort. A young black man suggests a conspiracy because New York police cars and the Israeli flags share the same colors. Norman Rosenbaum, the brother of the murdered Hasidic scholar, rages and expresses his grief.

Smith's characters indirectly indict the larger system. A black youth says that in Crown Heights you can be either a "bad boy" or a street deejay, not much else. Black community leader Richard Green observes, "This is something force will

Anna Deavere Smith's one-woman show explores the complexities of the Crown Heights tragedy.

not hold" and warns that blacks must look beyond cultural icons. "Malcolm is convenient," he says.

A 17-year-old Hasidic mournfully tells of the suicide of an old woman, terrified by the riots. The young man is a member of a black-Jewish basketball team, "The Cure." When Smith

turns, she reveals the inscription on the back of his jacket: "Increase the Peace." But the gaps between the communities, exemplified by the religious prohibitions that keep the Hasids from visiting their neighbors and eating non-kosher food, seem too great to bridge quickly.

Smith ends the play by portraying the somber, anguished Carmel Cato, father of Gavin, who talks bleakly of his hopes and his loss and sadly charges, "The Jewish people are running the whole show." His last words, in his Caribbean accent, resonate: "You can repeat every word that I say."

When the house lights come on and Smith takes her bows, she does not beam with the typical performer's relief, acknowledging that the wall between fantasy and reality has been knocked down. Her strained face suggests the sad transformations she has gone through and the recognition that there is much more to do.

Talking of silence: At the show I saw, Smith appeared afterward to answer questions from the audience, and, though the crowd apparently did not include blacks or Hasids from Crown Heights, the audience was deeply affected.

One man took off on the "lousy language" theme, noting that neither word used to describe Gavin Cato's death seemed honest. It was not, as blacks said, a murder, since the driver didn't act deliberately. Nor was it just an accident, as Hasids said, if the driver was drinking, speeding and running a red light, as alleged.

A former teacher in the neighborhood said she found the piece very balanced. "The silence that exists between the two groups is really very profound," she said.

Said Pogrebin, who appeared on the panel with Smith, "It allows us to think about all these issues without being polemical, rhetorical or threatening." Indeed, Smith can only touch on the complex tensions and politics in the neighborhood. But it is a start.

Highly praised by critics, *Fires in the Mirror* had its initial run extended until August 2 and may leave New York for other venues. Such a production is not a first for Smith, an associate professor of drama at Stanford University who is currently a fellow at Radcliffe College's Bunting Institute. It is part of a series, "On the Road: A Search for American Character," in which she creates theater out of controversial events, capturing the personality of a place through the contrasting, conflicting voices. Her next project, announced in June, will be an exploration of the recent Los Angeles riots.

Norman Oder is a freelance writer in New York.

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

Bigger is better

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), led with deregulatory zeal by Commissioner Al Sikes, has been hard at work. The latest: In mid-June the FCC dramatically loosened rules against cross-ownership of TV networks and cable systems. For the first time since 1970, broadcasters can own and operate cable systems. For the next three years, they'll be limited to owning up to 10 percent of the national market and half of a community's cable customers.

The restrictions on broadcasters' market power boldly contrast the current state of cable ownership. One company, TCI, has an effective monopoly over entire regions of the country, and controls outright a quarter of the national market. Public interest advocates have demanded that cable's market power be offset with the kind of checks that the FCC has required of broadcasters. There is, however, scant hope that restrictions on broadcasters will lead to similar restrictions on cablers. Indeed, current proposed legislation regulating cable does nothing substantial to control cable's market power.

The FCC will re-examine broadcasters' current restrictions in three years to see if they're still necessary, so the restrictions look to some like a fig leaf.

Dropping the rule will likely increase already majestic consolidation in the media industries. It might further weaken so-called "free," or advertiser-supported broadcast TV, if networks buy into cable systems and start favoring their own cable programming over broadcast. That's why local stations have opposed the move.

As in all the Sikes-led FCC "housecleanings" of broadcast rules, virtually absent has been any discussion of the public interest mandate that broadcasters carry as a result of using the public resource of the airwaves. Recently, following similar moves for radio, the FCC has proposed increasing the number of TV stations that a single company can own. It also has proposed permitting ownership of more than one TV station in a market and allowing ownership of more than one TV network. This has smaller companies raising eyebrows and clearing throats. Meanwhile, the upstart network Fox is enthusiastic. Decisions on these proposals, after public comment, should be made by the end of the year.

Titanic shifts

During heated Senate debate over public broadcasting funding, Sen. Robert Dole (R-KS) argued that public TV programming listed "like the Titanic" to the left. But if anything's listing, it's the board of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, made up of 10 political appointees. Since the mid-'80s, administration appointments have veered sharply to the right. The latest nominee is Ritajeau Hartung Butterworth of the Discovery Institute in Seattle. The Discovery Institute is also home to free marketeer George Gilder. Coincidentally, the latest conservative attack on public television heavily promotes market-based alternatives to public funding.

Alive and kicking

Not every public TV programmer is refusing to take risks. Series such as *Frontline* and *P.O.V.*, as well as the Independent Television Service, continue to exercise their First Amendment rights vigorously.

Alive TV, which used to be *Alive from Off-Center*, continues to demonstrate (under new leadership) that weird can be wonderful, and in fact the video-arts series seems to be cheerfully kicking sand into the face of public TV's would-be censors. Among its summer offerings: *Looking for Langston*, a romantic, evocative paean by a gay black Briton, Isaac Julien, to the legacy of Langston Hughes. Less controversially, it showcases a short clay-mation wonder called *Creature Comforts*, by Nick Park. It's a series of "interviews" with zoo denizens that ends up as a critique not only of zoos but of urban life—all in 10 minutes or so. Also in the eclectic mix is a video environmental essay by Hachivi Edgar Heap of Birds; the mordant combination of William Burroughs and downbeat filmmaker Gus Van Sant, who claim to revise our view of American history; and Brooklyn hip-hop.

Perhaps the most surprising selection is on *Alive TV's* schedule for July—the unstoppably intense *MTV: The Reagan Years*, co-produced with MTV. It's a breast-and-buttock filled compilation stressing MTV's savvy self-promotional commercials. Along with being a colossal commercial exploitation of public TV, the compilation documents well (without the benefit of analysis) the formation of what you might call "attitude TV." Check your local schedules.

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Voice of Deliverance: The Language of Martin Luther King Jr. and Its Sources

By Keith D. Miller
Free Press, 282 pp., \$22.95

By William E. Cain

WHEN THE *NEW YORK Times* published a front-page story in November 1990 that Martin Luther King Jr., while a graduate student at Boston University, had plagiarized much of his doctoral dissertation on the theologians Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman, the news quickly became the occasion for pious discontent and lamentation.

How could the noble King have stooped so low? Why did he maintain that material he had copied from other sources was his own work? Many said they felt betrayed, as though they had naively placed their trust in a leader who did not merit it and whose commitment to ethics and morality was tainted from the beginning.

One of the striking facts about King's dissertation, however, is that he dutifully cited the very books from which he mined phrases, sentences, entire paragraphs. He wasn't concealing them from view. It's clear, of course, that King failed to meet his academic responsibility: A dissertation is supposed to be original, a new contribution to knowledge. But as Keith D. Miller points out in his important, powerfully argued book, *Voice of Deliverance*, perhaps King's act of plagiarism simply suggests that he found the job of analyzing the abstruse theology of Tillich and Wieman to be dull and tedious. He was not passionately invested in the recondite topic, and, moreover, he did not share the norms of scholarly originality to which his advisers and academic authorities subscribed.

Something borrowed: What King did in his dissertation, he did throughout his career. The truth—and Miller amply documents it—is that King not only plagiarized large



Martin Luther King's 'borrowed' language

chunks of his dissertation but also many of his sermons and speeches, including the best and most memorable of them.

In February 1968, for example, two months before his assassination, King delivered a poignant sermon, titled "Drum Major Instinct," at a small church in Atlanta. The sermon concluded with brooding reflections

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about his life's mission and with guidance for his unnamed eulogist about the terms in which he should be commemorated. This conclusion seemed so painfully prophetic, so tragically fitting, that a tape of it was played at King's funeral. Miller shows that King took the bulk of his sermon, almost exactly, from one titled "Drum Major Instincts," presented in 1949 by a popular Florida preacher, J. Wallace Hamilton.

This sure looks like plagiarism,

but Miller convincingly argues that it isn't. He claims that "plagiarism" is in fact a misleading charge to hurl against King, for it implies assumptions about language he never embraced. Miller emphasizes that King was not stealing. He was adeptly, unashamedly "borrowing," locating himself within "a system of knowledge and persuasion created by generations of black folk preachers," among them his own father and grandfather.

Contrary to what previous scholars have believed, King was not, says Miller, much influenced by European philosophers and "great white thinkers" and professors. He was, instead, immersed in, and crucially influenced by, widely shared black oral traditions—especially the customs of the folk pulpit—and the massive outpouring of sermons in the post-war decades by such prominent preachers (many of them white) as Harry Emerson Fosdick, Harold Bos-

ley and Ralph Sockman.

King did what folk preachers had always done: He freely appropriated sermons that others had used, reshaping and modifying them where needed. Ralph Abernathy's widow, in fact, tells of hearing a minister present one of Rev. Abernathy's best-known sermons when he and she were attending the service themselves.

As Miller indicates, the members of the congregations who heard sermons expected to find in them familiar kinds of bracing allusions, scriptural passages, metaphors, images, verbal structures, lessons. They counted on the preacher to deliver the Word, reiterating and repeating truth, not tendering new, original truths of his own. This was an essential and highly conventionalized part of the ritual that all good preachers understood and practiced.

For King, Miller states, language was a "common treasure" rather than "private property" attached to a copyright. He merged his voice with other voices, black as well as white, selecting what he required from the texts he read and sermons he heard, and often adding to them the piercing anti-racist message and insistence on racial justice and harmony that a specific event, boycott or demonstration demanded.

Usually King chose and built upon only the best-known sermons by the

King was accused of plagiarism. But this book argues that he came from a tradition in which words were a "common treasure."

most famous preachers: Their popularity worked to his advantage. Frequently King even borrowed from himself, rearranging parts of old sermons and speeches into innovative, yet at the same time recognizable, combinations.

King brought together the religious and folk traditions of African-Americans and the themes of Fosdick and other renowned American preachers—the preachers who were successfully reaching and stirring white audiences. He synthesized their strengths and, in a way no one had rivaled before or has matched since, managed to "transport black demands into a white universe."

For a few precious years, King made racial equality a luminous mainstream idea, something that could not be denied. With absolute sincerity and conviction, he designed a brilliant strategy for legitimizing goals that many in America had long neglected or scorned. This was an extraordinary achievement, a majestic feat of moral persuasion and appeal, and Miller evokes it well.

King was, as Miller affirms, an "oratorical genius." But he was also extremely controversial, particularly in the final stages of his career when he opposed the war in Vietnam and shifted from fighting segregation to ending poverty, eliminating the slums, ensuring full employment. This, as he was keenly aware, meant redistributing wealth and power in America and, indeed, across the globe. As King observed in October 1964, the campaign he led needed to move from "protest to politics, for we are now facing basic social and economic problems that require political reform." Repeatedly, he linked racism, militarism and economic exploitation and advocated a complete reordering of national priorities. His language was becoming evermore daring and dangerous.

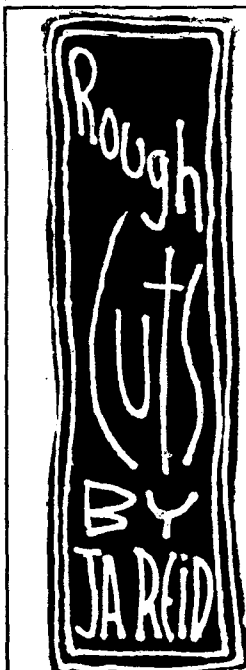
Straight talk: *Voice of Deliverance* slips in analysis of these final years of King's oratory. Miller contends that King badly faltered whenever he abandoned his customary best verbal resources, and, resembling Hubert Humphrey and George McGovern rather than an inspired preacher, proceeded to churn out flat, ineffectual speeches like "A Time to Break Silence," delivered in April 1967.

But the difficulty King encountered with this speech had, I think, less to do with its style than with its substance. In the speech, he took his stand against the war and underscored that "if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. ... A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

It's not that King's language failed but, rather, that it finally was identifying the forces—imperialism and capitalism—that engineered and profited from racism. That's when King met resistances his language could not overcome. He persevered in the struggle and embraced a form of non-violent populism, yet he admitted that his hopes for America would not be peacefully fulfilled. Which is perhaps why he judged that the violence that tore apart America's cities was inevitable and would surely erupt again. He knew that people could not be brutalized forever, that some day they would fight back in anger and despair and that violence would spread. We see it spreading now.

King was a beautiful, brave preacher and prophet. He was also an outspoken radical and revolutionary who accurately described the extent of the power mobilized against the world's poor and minorities. This is the King whom America would not tolerate in the mid-'60s and cannot bear to acknowledge today.

William E. Cain teaches at Wellesley College.



Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel about the American Obsession

By Studs Terkel
The New Press, 403 pp., \$24.95

By James North

BEING INTERVIEWED BY Studs Terkel is a unique and unforgettable experience. You show up—it could be his radio studio, but it could also be a street corner in your neighborhood—and you encounter what seems to be a disorganized little man in a red checked shirt fumbling about with his recording equipment, smoking foul thin cigarillos and grumbling in a friendly tone.

He greets you and continues talking to himself, complaining about his elderly tape recorder. His voice is rich and gravelly, with the cadences and argot of a '30s city hall reporter who spends a lot of time at the race track. After giving his machine a few more thwacks, he distractedly notices you again, squints up at you and asks, "What were we gonna talk about?"

You have your doubts about this man, however well-known he may be, and his apparent mechanical illiteracy does not inspire confidence either. But he seems nice and you want to help him out. So when he asks you what it's like to be the only black man in your corporation's law department, or a white firefighter when affirmative action goes into effect, you listen very carefully. You may have answered these questions before, but you really want to give him a hand. Besides, he's smiling at you with that lopsided squint.

As you start to answer, he leans forward, nodding with vigorous approval. In that rich, rough voice, he asks more questions, indicating that he has listened to other black lawyers, to other white firefighters. You ponder his questions even more carefully, look deep within yourself. By now, he is fidgeting around happily; he can hardly keep himself from interrupting you to ask you more. You find yourself talking to him with a feeling and eloquence that surprises you.

The listener: In *Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel about the American Obsession*, Studs Terkel has succeeded once again. His 80-odd interviews with a range of people are filled with insights, eloquence and emotional power. He opens with Mamie Mobley, whose son, Emmett Till, was in 1955 one of the last lynching victims in the South. She is forgiving, despite losing her only child in such a horrifying way.

Terkel listens to people in their neighborhoods, on their jobs, at colleges where racial tension seems to be rising. As in his previous half-dozen collections of interviews, he makes no claim to be scientific or representative. He is looking for people who can talk about what is, in 1992, well over a century after slavery ended, still our greatest problem.

Listen to Quinn Brisben, a white



Talking about race—into Terkel's tape recorder

teacher with years of experience in black schools, explain how people in the larger world (such as former New York Mayor Edward Koch a few years back) put language pressure on black students: "They tell you the way your parents spoke is bad and wrong. They say these are bad people who say 'I be' or 'I aks your mama.' This simply isn't so. There is such a thing as standard English. It can be taught with the good motives of Henry Higgins. This is the way it ought to be taught. This is your ticket up and out. But what do you do when you go back to your mother and father and speak to them? I know all kinds of parents and grandparents who are uncomfortable around their educated children."

Or listen to *In These Times'* own senior editor Salim Muwakkil, who with extraordinary perspective describes his personal and political sojourn over the past decades. He served in the military, was gratuitously shot by a white hotel clerk, turned toward the separatist Nation of Islam and then evolved into the thoughtful, accomplished independent journalist and person he is today. I have known Salim for years, but I had no idea what an ordeal he has come through. In person, he does not dwell on the injustices in his past. Yet that energetic little man with the tape recorder got him to talk.

But what are generally missing in *Race* are, well, "racists." It may be the most misused word in the English language, clumsily applied to an almost infinite spectrum of attitudes. It is not helpful or even accurate to equate the white pipefitter who doesn't like affirmative action because he wants to bring his own son into the union with an outright Klansman.

Terkel has interviewed a few

whites with attitudes that might be fairly described as "racist," but his book is overwhelmingly weighted toward the attitude that race is false consciousness, that race divides people who should belong to the same labor unions and community organizations, that genuine understanding can win out, that once you get to know the other person true brotherhood can grow. Several of his strongest sections are on multiracial friendships. He could have titled the book "Anti-Racism."

Private prejudice: But in the '90s, white racism is more elusive. After the '70s and the '80s, after *Sesame Street* and *The Cosby Show*, open bigotry has been replaced by something more subtle. These days, one characteristic attitude is shown by those white voters who tell telephone pollsters they will vote for the black candidate (and who may even mean it), but who, in the privacy of the booth, vote their skin color. In the '90s, racial attitudes have become confusing even to the people who hold them.

Studs Terkel's problem is that his friendly, tolerant manner is usually not going to get these kinds of people to open up. What he should do is scrunch his face into a scowl, conceal his tape recorder and then head into white middle-class areas and mutter about "large families" or slip into certain intellectual circles and complain knowingly about being "mugged by reality."

In fairness, Terkel's anti-racists are perceptive and they do help us to understand racism better. Take, for instance, Ben Hensley, a white truck driver who says that early in his life he got promoted over a better qualified black co-worker due to what was in effect affirmative action for whites. Hensley concludes, "I think most white people realize, deep, deep down, that that other per-

son is just as good as they are. But they don't want to be saddled with something so hard. They like to conform. It's easier. No matter how good a black man was, he was the bottom. He could be a hard-working man, take care of his family and treat everybody right, some people would look at him as just a nigger. No matter how tough it might be, you could always say, 'At least I'm not a nigger.'"

By no means are the kind of racial feelings an undercover, nasty, out-of-character Terkel could uncover confined to blue-collar neighborhoods. As one of his informants, a white editor, points out, "Some of the worst offenders are the ex-liberals, who differ from the old-time racists only in the academic language they use."

Racism can be so irrational that it cannot be reduced to the coherence of words. Jean-Paul Sartre, in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, makes the point brilliantly. When the anti-Semite is shown a Jew who is not commerce-minded or who does not fit one of the other stereotypes, he is delighted: "Of course, he's just concealing his true nature." It couldn't hurt to direct American racists to Terkel's book, where they would learn that a mother on public assistance receives only \$3 more per day for each additional child, hardly a big incentive for a large family. But the racist can always come up with a seemingly endless list of other "reasons." As Sartre says, anti-Semitism is not an idea, but a passion, which precedes rational thought and which twists and distorts shamelessly to justify itself.

Sartre's complex argument is not easily condensed, but here is some of its flavor: The anti-Semite is "a man who is afraid. Not of the Jews, to be sure, but of himself, of his own consciousness, of his liberty, of his instincts, of his responsibilities, of solitariness, of change, of society, and of the world—of everything except the Jews."

Those who, like professor William Julius Wilson at the University of Chicago, argue for class-based rather

than race-based programs to put together progressive coalitions that can win elections are obviously at least partly right. Racial animosity among some whites does seem to increase when the economy turns sour. But a boom alone would not be enough to continue eroding racism.

Bright outlook: On balance, Terkel's message is optimistic: His informants seem to agree that racism declined in the U.S. during the '60s and

ORAL HISTORY

'70s, but that the '80s have been marked by at best stagnation, at worst reversal of some previous gains.

It is more than just coincidence that racism declined during the years that black people spoke out, marched and asserted their rights. Lewis Nkosi, a black South African writer, once maintained, "It is not so much because they have 'a different smell' or because their cultures are different that black people are frequently beaten over the head by marauding gangs of white men, notwithstanding assertions to the contrary by social scientists and social workers, but simply because powerless people invite contempt and deserve being beaten over the head."

Nkosi's statement can be misconstrued; he is not endorsing violence. He means that people who stand up for their rights force the people who hate them to start reconsidering. Martin Luther King was non-violent but not powerless. The '80s, with the brief exceptions of the two Jesse Jackson presidential campaigns, were relatively quiet. Racists are bullies, and they are not placated by quiet.

But there is no reason Americans in the '90s should regard our country as uniquely blighted. Official Marxism's greatest mistake was to assert that racial and ethnic feelings would be replaced by class consciousness. Yugoslavia is tearing itself apart ethnically; in Sri Lanka, fratricide has reduced a once peaceful island to spasms of killing; another spate of ethnic riots just ended in northern Nigeria; the openly racist Jean-Marie Le Pen is a major political force in France.

If anything, our experience over the past few decades has made us more equipped to keep trying to build a genuinely multiethnic society. The first reactions to the Los Angeles uprising have been heartening; the polls seem to suggest that a majority of white Americans want positive government action to improve ghetto conditions instead of just more law and order.

Many of the people who speak out in *Race* have spent years confronting racial issues in their neighborhoods, in their workplaces and in themselves. Their hope, strength and experience will be powerful examples in the years ahead. As will the life of the man with the tape recorder who got them to speak. ■

James North writes frequently for *In These Times*.

Abortion

Continued from page 24

analysis of the central role of sexuality and race in postwar American culture yet written—is of particular relevance now that the *Roe vs. Wade* era seems to be coming to an end. Though she rarely spells out the implications

of her arguments in detail, and deals with the issue of abortion only in passing, Solinger rightly considers the book to be as much a political as a historiographical intervention. Her analysis clearly shows how, in the words of Maurice Godelier, "It is not sexuality which haunts society, but society which haunts the body's sexuality." The debates over single

motherhood, Solinger makes clear, strengthened the divisions between white and black and subjected women on both sides of the divide to a tightly regulated disgrace.

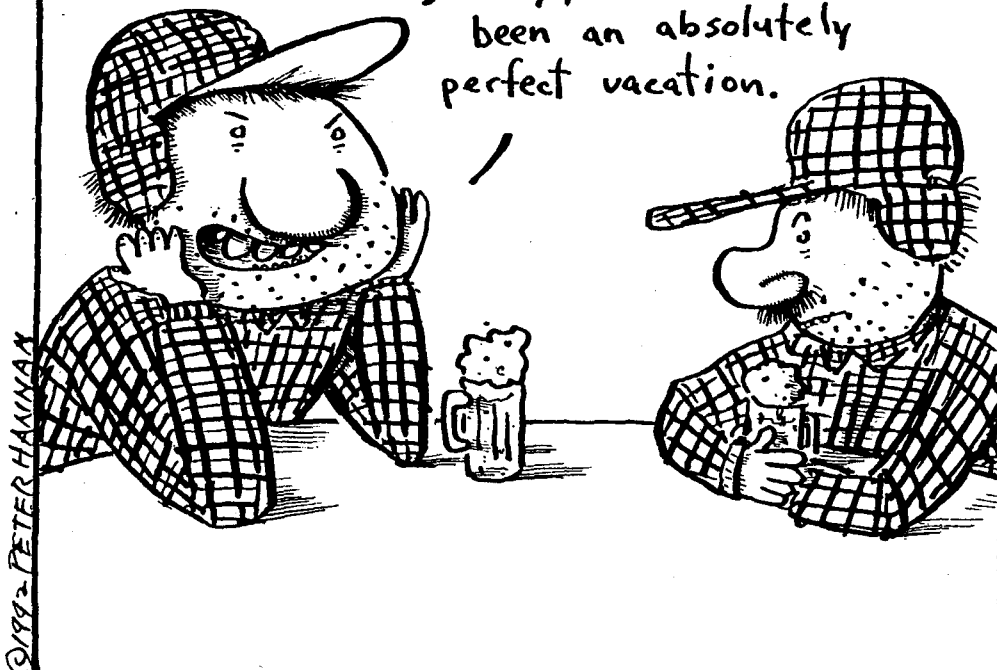
Today, as Solinger points out, the "Reagan-Bush abortion agenda," framed in the same misleadingly moralistic terms as the debate over unwed motherhood, "yearns to reproduce a society in which all 'illegitimate mothers' are in disgrace and danger, without

male protection." Her book reminds us all how central the issue of reproductive choice (and of the resources necessary to provide choice for all) is to the aims of feminism, and human freedom in general. ■

David Futrelle, a graduate student in American history at Northwestern University, is writing a dissertation on the changing conceptions of youth culture in the postwar years.

The Adventures of a Huge Mouth, by Peter Hannan

No nagging wives, no screaming kids, no worries. If Shorty hadn't momentarily gone and looked exactly like an 800-pound grizzly, this would've been an absolutely perfect vacation.



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July 12-17

PEACE STUDIES SUMMER INSTITUTE to be held at Milwaukee. This summer from July 12 through 17, 1992, a one-week peace studies summer institute will be held at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The Institute will be for professors and academic staff at colleges and universities who want to learn more about how to start peace studies programs on their campuses. The Institute will be run by Ian Harris from UWM and Linda Forcey from the State University of New York at Binghamton and will cost \$250. Registration materials are available from Dr. Ian M. Harris at the Department of Educational Policy and Community Studies, P.O. Box 413, Milwaukee, WI 53201, or call (414) 229-4724.

YOUNGSTOWN, OH

July 20-25

Local activists have united to establish the Ed Mann Labor School in honor of the recently deceased

steelworker dissident. Join Staughton Lynd, Jerry Tucker and others in a school for rank-and-file activists by rank-and-file activists. Cost is \$15 for the week. Contact Ed Mann Labor School, 2267 Colorado Ave., Youngstown, OH 44504. (216) 743-6969.

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August 2-9

Greens Gathering, Augsburg College. Green Economics Training, Gathering and Green Congress. Conference Themes: 500 Years of Resistance and Dignity; Detroit Summer; Solar Power through Community Power; Independent Electoral Politics; Building Green Locals. Co-sponsored by KFAL Radio. Call (612) 772-0727 for registration information.

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August 27-30

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by Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon

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Martin A. Lee is the publisher of *Extra!*, the journal of FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting) and author of *Acid Dreams: The CIA, LSD and the Sixties Rebellion*. **Norman Solomon**, a FAIR advisory board member, is co-author of *Killing Our Own: The Disaster of America's Experience with Atomic Radiation*.

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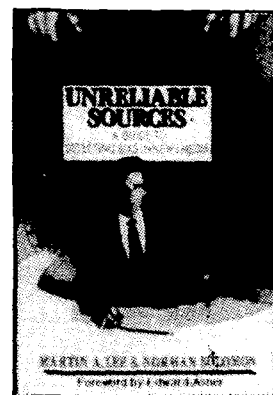
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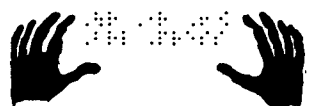
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The bad old days

America's twisted "family values" before *Roe vs. Wade*

Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before *Roe vs. Wade*

By Rickie Solinger
Routledge, 324 pp., \$25

BY DAVID FUTRELLE

When Dan Quayle took a few moments in a now-notorious speech to attack fictional journalist Murphy Brown's out-of-wedlock TV childbirth as a symptom of all that is wrong with America, it was immediately obvious that the boy vice president was in over his head.

The problem wasn't really, as some talk-show hosts implied, that Quayle seemed to have trouble distinguishing between reality and television. We all have that trouble nowadays. And it wasn't that his comments, decrying the birth itself, seemed to contradict the administration's putative "pro-life" family policy. The policy is a welter of contradictions as it is. It wasn't even that he was attacking single mothers. After all, in the ongoing debates about welfare, they're still considered a legitimate target.

The real problem, of course, was that Quayle had inadvertently attacked the *wrong kind* of single mother. Murphy Brown—affluent, white, in control of her (fictional) life—bears scant resemblance to the popular stereotype of the single mom: the irresponsible teenage denizen of the "underclass," probably black, probably on drugs, living in public housing, scheming to bear more babies so that she can con the hardworking taxpayer out of more of his hard-earned dough.

In *Newsweek*, reputedly liberal feminist Eleanor Clift spelled out, in carefully coded clichés, the properly enlightened position on the Brown question. "The absence of fathers is one of the central pathologies of the underclass," Clift asserted. "As a society, we do need to address the spiraling teen-pregnancy rate, especially in the inner cities. But that's a different phenomenon from Murphy Brown, an over-40, overachieving figment of some screenwriter's imagination. If personal responsibility is the test, Murphy passes."

Underclass, pathology, responsibility. Haven't we heard all this before?

Indeed we have. In her important new book, *Wake Up Little Susie*, historian Rickie Solinger shows how the politics of single motherhood have always been steeped in self-righteous moralism, in implicit (if not explicit) racial bigotry. Throughout the postwar era, Solinger argues, women's bodies have been at the center of an invidious political crusade, the site of protracted, destructive political/moral campaigns designed, ultimately, to perpetuate racial and sexual inequality.

Unwed pregnant young women, symbolizing in their very person the dangers

of "unlicensed" premarital sexuality, became easy scapegoats for a variety of social ills. The treatment of these young women, Solinger argues, "reflected a powerful and enduring willingness in our culture to use women's bodies to promote conservative political goals."

In the wake of the Supreme Court's recent abortion decision, which increased state legislatures' powers to regulate abortion, women's bodies have again moved to the center of the political arena, subject again to the same pernicious "moral" agenda.

Prior to the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision, all single mothers (white, black, rich, poor) were considered legitimate, even necessary, targets. They represented a sexuality that was, quite literally, out of control—outside the realm of propriety—and, in order to maintain the proper boundaries of respectability, these women had to be brought to heel. The notion of single motherhood was so subversive to sexual norms at the time that the "solutions" were often cruelly destructive—women were vilified in popular culture, watched over and (if the women were not white) subject to abuses as extreme as forced sterilization.

As Solinger points out, the experience of single mothers was determined, above all, by the color of their skin. White women and girls who "got themselves in trouble" were offered a route back into "respectable" society if they gave up their children for adoption; their children were highly valued (on the adoption market and in a broader symbolic sense) so long as the mothers did not exhibit a "neurotic" compulsion to raise

them themselves.

Black women and girls, on the other hand, could not (and generally did not want to) give their children up for adoption. Black single mothers who kept their children were more easily accepted into black society than their white counterparts, though they faced a more vicious assault of "morality" from outside and suffered from severe restrictions on necessary social services.

For white girls and women, unwed pregnancy represented not so much a sin as a symptom of neurosis and "immaturity." Because they were seen as sick, not fallen, these young women could be "cured" of their malady and returned to their normal lives, in theory at least, little the worse for wear. During the months when their pregnancy was visible, pregnant white teenagers disappeared from respectable society—kept inside their own homes, sent to "visit" faraway relatives or locked behind the gates of the omnipresent maternity homes that dotted the American landscape in the '50s.

Shrouded in disgrace, these homes were both detention halls and finishing schools for the pregnant girls, shaming their inhabitants while simultaneously attempting to teach the proper kind of femininity to those who had strayed. Girls were taught "wifely" skills (sewing, knitting and so on) and the skills seen as necessary to become wives in the first place—how to choose and "win" the proper man.

As Solinger points out, many of these homes undertook their "educational" mission with an evangelical zeal, be-

coming "more interested in full access to the malleable minds of unwed mothers than they were in helping girls through their shameful pregnancies." The line between education and punishment was indeed blurred.

Solinger's picture of the maternity homes—physical symbols of the disgrace of unwed pregnancy—is almost unrelentingly bleak. Though the inhabitants of these homes were able to some degree to carve out a "group culture" filled with activities and rituals designed to maintain a rudimentary community and a degree of dignity, the most striking fact about the home was the almost complete lack of control of these young women over their lives.

This was particularly acute when the wishes of the pregnant girls ran counter to what Solinger calls the "relinquishment culture" of the maternity homes. Girls sat through classes with Orwellian titles like "My Baby and Me: Hello and Goodbye" and were taught that any desire to keep their child was, like the pregnancy itself, simply a symptom of immaturity and neurosis. As one psychologist wrote, the young woman was expected to "be a mother by relinquishing the child." The children were valued far more than their mothers.

But if white single mothers were seen as treatable neurotics, black unwed mothers were castigated (in the words of one politician) as "social parasites ... breed[ing] illegitimate children at the taxpayer's expense." The language used to describe these women was laden with an invidious bigotry posing as moralism; even ostensibly objective observers like journalist Theodore H. White denounced the supposed "biological anarchy" of the black community, filled with "zoological tenebents" and "loveless breeding warrens," in which black women engaged in "mating and breeding without responsibility."

While white "breeders" produced a valuable product—white babies—black women were seen simply as perpetuating a culture mired in a cycle of pathology. "In the mother-blaming mode of the postwar decades," Solinger writes, "many analysts identified the black single mother's alleged hypersexuality and immorality, her resulting children and the public expense as traceable to the source: the Negro woman who gave birth, as it were, to black America, with all its 'defects.'"

The fear of black sexuality, of a black "population bomb," led many white politicians to call for punitive sterilization of "promiscuous" black women—especially in the '60s, when the debate shifted from putative questions of morality to the problem of population control and "unwanted babies." "For many," Solinger writes, "it was now immaterial whether black women had babies because of their biological or their cultural propensities; the point was that they must be stopped." The debate, alas, has not moved very far from this sorry point.

Solinger's book—the most brilliantly acute

Continued on page 22

